A STUDY OF THE DIFFERENCES IN PERCEPTIONS BETWEEN POTENTIAL AND NON-POTENTIAL SCHOOL DROPOUTS ON SELECT ASPECTS OF SCHOOL LIFE

JOAN MARY O'REILLY

A STUDY OF THE DIFFERENCES IN PERCEPTIONS BETWEEN POTENTIAL AND NON-POTENTIAL SCHOOL DROPOUTS ON SELECT ASPECTS OF SCHOOL LIFE

by

© Joan Mary O'Reilly, B.A.(Ed.), B.A.

A thesis submitted to the
School of Graduate Studies in
partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of Master of Education

Department of Educational Psychology
Memorial University of Newfoundland

August, 1988

St. John's Newfoundland

ISBN 0-315-50453-6

ABSTRACT

The vast amount of research that has been conducted on the problem of students dropping out of school shows that the causes and solutions are multifaceted. This situation demands extensive research in all dimensions of the problem and in particular in areas that would suggest a proactive approach to the problem. While in the past numerous studies have concentrated on causes external to the school, recently there have been calls for schools to examine internal influences on the dropping out process. It is the conviction of this researcher and supported in the literature that schools can prevent students from dropping out of school. Such prevention, however, requires early insights into the reality of school for students, especially for those who are showing signs of alienation from the school. The purpose of this study is to examine the differences in perceptions on selected aspects of school life, among sixth and seventh grade students classified as potential and non-potential school dropouts.

Four research questions were posed in this study. These questions focused on the determination of signif-

icant differences between the two groups on perceptions of four aspects of school life, broadly defined as teachers, school discipline, school work, and school success. These four aspects were more specifically broken down into eleven school related variables. These variables were identified as: teacher attitudes, teacher behaviours, teacher expectations, effectiveness of school discipline, fairness of school discipline, interest of school work, relevance of school work, difficulty of school work, satisfaction with school work, expectations for school success, and opportunities for school success. Data were gathered by means of a Student Checklist which required both a frequency and an intensity response from students on perceptions. By statistical analysis, it was determined that significant differences existed in the frequency of perceptions between potential and non-potential school dropouts on all variables. It was also determined that significant differences occurred in intensity of perceptions but only on several variables, specifically, fairness of school discipline, difficulty of school work, and expectations for school success.

The fact that potential school dropouts in this

study hold more negative perceptions of school long before they decide to drop out has implications for the prevention of dropping out for schools. Knowledge that students who have been identified to be at risk of dropping out hold significantly more negative perceptions of school than other students, could stimulate educators to re-examine their responses to those students in an effort to strengthen their bonds with the school.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I wish to take this opportunity to express my appreciation to those people who have encouraged and supported me in this work by believing in me, trusting me, and enabling me to grow.

Special appreciation is extended to Mrs. Mildred Cahill, my advisor, whose dedication, willingness to give of herself, and constant affirmation was inspirational.

Sincere gratitude is also extended to Dr. David Watts and Dr. Thomas Pope for their thorough evaluation of this study.

The cooperation and assistance provided by the administrators, teachers, and students of the schools involved in this study is deeply appreciated.

To my husband, Les, son, Leslie, and daughter, Kimberly, goes a very special thanks. Their understanding, caring, and belief in me has been life giving.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES

CHAPTER I

Introduction

This chapter contains the purpose, rationale and significance of the study, research questions, definitions of terms, and limitations of the study.

Statement of Purpose

The purpose of this study was to examine the differences in perceptions among sixth and seventh grade students classified as potential and non-potential school dropouts within six schools in the St. John's area on selected aspects of school life. The aspects of school life investigated were teachers, school discipline, school work, and school success. More specifically, these four aspects of school life were subdivided into eleven variables which were identified as: (a) teacher attitudes, (b) teacher behaviours, (c) teacher expectations, (d) effectiveness of school discipline, (e) fairness of school discipline, (f) interest of school work, (g) relevance of school work, (g) difficulty of school work, (h) satisfaction with school work, (i) expectations for school success, and (j) opportunities for school success.

Rationale and Significance of the Study

Rationale.

This study was based on the belief that schools can have a positive influence on the school dropout problem. It was conducted in an effort to gain new insights into the prevention of students dropping out by investigating the school's influence in this process. These insights were provided by way of student's perceptions of selected aspects of school life, prior to secondary school, where many decide to drop out.

The literature on dropouts clearly shows that no one reason can account for leaving school early; the phenomenon is attributed to a whole host of intervening factors including social, school related, familial and economic (Cipywnyk, Pawlowich, & Randhawa, 1983; Greene, 1966; Kumar, Pedro & Watson, 1977; Pebbles, 1973; Self, 1985). Much of the research that has been conducted in the past have focused on studying a wide range of these influences and have provided a great deal of information on the characteristics of dropouts and the reasons for dropping out. Such research, however, has not provided solutions to the dropping out problem. Wehlage and Rutter (1986) concluded that research efforts will continue to be ineffective in providing data that could

contribute to a decline in the dropout rate if the focus remains on factors that are beyond the control of the educational system. The focus on school-related factors is not a denial of the important role which family background, economic status and other fixed attributes of the student play in the dropping out process. Rather, it is a recognition that certain school conditions, when combined with certain student characteristics, are responsible for students dropping out (Wehlage & Rutter, 1986). The school as one of the main socializing agents in the life of the child must be willing to continually assess how it responds to all children, regardless of their backgrounds.

Research carried out from the perspective of those who are most involved in the educational system, the students, can provide insights into the nature of the problem of dropping out. It is the reality of the school for the student that will largely influence his/her decision to drop out. It is recognized that students' perceptions of the school are colored by social, family, and personal variables such as family attitudes toward school and the value placed upon education by the family. However, it is also recognized that the students are "active interpreters of classroom reality and that

they draw inferences about the causes and effects of behaviors" (Weinstein, 1983, p. 288). It is the inferences that they draw from their school experiences which are filtered by their personal understanding of the world that are responsible for their perceptions of school. If students perceive that the school is a place where they are unappreciated and are not experiencing success, then it is not difficult to see why those students would disengage themselves from the school as soon as possible. If schools are to make an attempt to turn around negative perceptions of school held by students, it is important that teachers be aware of these perceptions early. At the sixth and seventh grade levels, students have already been exposed to 7-8 years of school and have built up perceptions about school. Knowledge of student perceptions at these levels and even earlier can provide the school with time to respond. Teachers, sensitive to the feelings of alienation of those students could examine how they could alter negative perceptions and thereby, strengthen the students' bonds with the school.

Results from research have indicated that students' perceptions of teachers, school discipline, school work, and school success have been areas of difficulty for those who have already dropped out of school. This study

investigated how the perceptions of sixth and seventh grade potential school dropouts differed from the perceptions of non-potential dropouts on these selected areas of school life.

A review of the literature (Self, 1985) on school dropouts revealed that many dropouts cited difficulty in dealing with teachers as a problematic area of school life and as a reason for leaving school. Wehlage and Rutter (1986) stated:

> There is evidence that many students do not believe that teachers are interested in them. To the extent that those who come from disadvantaged backgrounds perceive a less than firm commitment by the institution to educate them, their school efforts are likely to be sincere. (p. 390)

Results from research have also shown that teachers can be a powerful force in preventing alienation, especially below secondary school and that students can infer a great deal from teacher attitudes, behaviours, and expectations (Weinstein, 1985). Numerous studies conducted in the area of differential teacher interactional

patterns in the classroom, has documented evidence that students' perceptions of positive teacher attitudes, behaviours, and expectations are related to greater student adaptation to school (Brophy & Good, 1973; Davison & Lang, 1960; Radwanski, 1987; Rosenthal & Jacobson, 1968). If students infer that they are competent, cared for and generally the subject of teacher concern, then it is reasonable that they would form strong commitments to the school. On the other hand, the school which conveys negative messages through teacher expectations, attitudes, and behaviours to the student is admitting a loose commitment to a successful school experience for that child (Wehlage, 1988).

Studies on school dropouts have shown that one of the distinguishing characteristics of a school dropout is a greater than normal problem with school discipline and this plays a major role in the dropouts' decision to leave school (Self, 1985). Wehlage and Rutter (1986), who conducted extensive research into the problem of dropouts, confirmed the belief that problems with the disciplinary system lead to student alienation from school. Their findings clearly indicated that students' perceptions of the discipline system as being ineffective and unfair formed a pattern that caused students to

disengage themselves from the school (p. 389).

One of the most important domains of the student's life in school is the school work that he/she is required to do each day. The students interest in, and feeling that school work is relevant, in that it will provide them with necessary skills, will be a motivating force that will encourage participation and success in school. In a review of the literature conducted by Self (1985), it was shown that one of the most frequently cited reasons for dropping out was the lack of interest in school. Local evidence, contained in statistics released by the Department of Education, Education Statistics (1988), and the Leaving Early (1984) study associated dropping out with dissatisfaction with school work or school programs. The Leaving Early study found a strong relationship between dropping out and "not liking school subjects" while the Department of Education's most recent statistics correlated difficulty of school programs with students dropping out of school. These studies suggested that when students perceive that much of what they do in school does not make sense, gives them little satisfaction, and is not interesting, the resulting boredom will certainly not contribute to their making positive decisions about staying in school.

Results of research on school-related reasons which students give for dropping out indicated that failure to perform academically is the most frequently cited reason (Pang & Tabai, 1983; Ross, 1983; Self, 1985; Wehlage & Rutter, 1986). The idea that "nothing succeeds like success and nothing fails like failure" holds a great deal of wisdom. Implicit in this idea is that one can be motivated by success and discouraged by failure. This is an area where it is important for schools to look beyond the characteristics of the dropout and into the institutional characteristics that might affect those students in negative ways. Wehlage and Rutter (1986) stated that "presumably the school is obligated to create an environment in which those youth can experience some kind of success, find institutional participation rewarding and develop aspirations for additional schooling that lead to satisfying employment" (p. 377). This has implications for the kind of experiences that schools provide to students which allow them to experience success.

Success in school has often meant being evaluated in comparison to others as well as in terms of one's own abilities. Competition has been an accepted and well utilized means of motivating students within the school. This practice may be very motivating for high achieving

students but for the student who never "wins" or never expects to win through superior performance, this may be a source of discouragement providing few opportunities for success and thus, few reasons for continued effort in the classroom. A greater emphasis on individual and cooperative learning as put forth by McDahiel (1984), could be motivating for the lower achieving student by allowing the student the opportunity to share in group success and experience the pleasure of working productively together with peers toward common goals.

This study was designed to determine how potential school dropouts, who were basically low achievers, viewed opportunities for success within the school and how a perceived lack of opportunity to experience the joys of success was of concern to them. An awareness of students' perceptions of their chances for successful experiences could serve as a reminder to teachers that all children need to experience the encouragement, acceptance, and sense of worth that comes with success, if persistence is to be expected. An understanding of how students are affected by repeated experiences in which they do not expect to measure up will enable the teacher to be more sensitive to providing experiences that will give students a clearer sense of progress

toward stated goals. This will ensure that a continued sense of failure do not permeate their school experience.

Knowledge gained from this study will provide information to school officials on how students perceive school practices and policies. It may be shown that students perceptions of these practices and policies will indicate that there is little congruence between what the school intended and what the student perceives as being intended. It may be that students perceive themselves as being rejected by the school.

Early identification of students who are showing symptoms of alienation from school and listening to their perceptions and feelings about what goes on in school could lead to a better understanding of students by teachers. These teachers, in turn, could adapt their approach so that the student's bond with the school could be strengthened. This would not necessarily require drastic changes in school organization but rather a more differential approach by teachers and school personnel to students who demonstrate a lack of commitment to school. Several recent local studies have addressed the need for early identification of problems experienced in schools. The Leaving Early (1984) study made several recommend- that will give students a clearer sense of progress

investigation into their problems. The Report of the Royal Commission on Employment and Unemployment (1986) saw student retention as a major thrust "for the next stage in Newfoundland's development in education" and issued a challenge for schools to examine how they were meeting the needs of students (p. 312).

This study then, was designed to aid in the early identification of at-risk students and their perceived difficulties with school as related to teachers, discipline, school work, and school success. Through a comparison of responses by potential and non-potential dropouts, information was gathered on differences in the frequency of their perceptions, and also the degree to which they perceive themselves to be bothered by negatively viewed school situations. This information will be important to school officials in developing a greater understanding and sensitivity to the students' experience in school. Such understanding could result in the re-examination of present ways of responding to alienated students which could be contributing to their sense of alienation and risk of dropping out.

Significance.

The seriousness and the extent of the dropout prob-

lem continues to warrant extensive research into factors that may be contributing to this phenomena. A number of major studies completed in this province indicated that the dropout rate is still very high, with figures ranging around thirty-three percent. In 1984 the report, Leaving Early - A Study of Student Retention in Newfoundland and Labrador, revealed that one-third of the children who registered for kindergarten in 1968 dropped out. In a recent news release by the Newfoundland Department of Education it was revealed that in 1986-87, 1700 students dropped out of Newfoundland schools. The Report of the Royal Commission on Employment and Unemployment. (1986) expressed concern for the high dropout rate within the province and suggested that priority be given to the area of student retention.

Traditionally, many studies (Cipywnyk et al., 1983; Greene, 1966; Pebbles, 1973; Watson, 1977) have examined a wide range of contributing factors, many of which were external and outside the control of the school. Recently, attention has turned toward early identification and prevention of school dropouts at the level of the school (Peck et al., 1987). This study was in keeping with this trend and was designed to aid the identification and prevention efforts by providing per-

ceptual data from students long before they decide to drop out.

This study sought to investigate how students identified as potential school dropouts viewed selected aspects of school life as compared to non-potential school dropouts. The aspects of school life selected for study -- teachers, discipline, school success, school work -- have been shown by research to be areas of difficulty for students who have dropped out. The perceptions of potential school dropouts relative to non-potential school dropouts at the Grade Six and Seven levels will provide information on how these students view these selected aspects of school life prior to making the decision to drop out.

It is hoped that this knowledge will contribute to a greater understanding of sources of alienation for potential school dropouts. This understanding may sensitize educators to perceived sources of difficulty for potential school dropouts and encourage them to seek new ways to make school a more satisfying experience for these students. For example, if potential school dropouts indicated more significantly than non-potential school dropouts that teachers did not see them as being important, then knowledge of this could stimulate teachers to

reflect on ways by which they could reverse this perception. Such efforts may prevent students who are now at risk of not completing high school from deciding that "school is not for me."

Research Questions

This study was designed to answer the following research questions:

1. Are there significant differences in frequency and intensity of perceptions between potential and non-potential school dropouts on (a) teacher attitudes, (b) teacher behaviours, and (c) teacher expectations?

2. Are there significant differences in frequency and intensity of perceptions between potential and non-potential school dropouts on (a) effectiveness of school discipline, and (b) fairness of school discipline?

3. Are there significant differences in frequency and intensity of perceptions between potential and non-potential school dropouts on (a) interest of school work, (b) relevance of school work, (c) difficulty of school work, and (d) satisfaction with school work?

4. Are there significant differences in frequency and intensity of perceptions between potential and non-potential school dropouts on (a) expectations for school

success and (b) opportunities for school success?

Definition of Terms

To clarify the meaning of terms used in this study, the following definitions were presented:

Dropout	Any student who left school, for any other reason, except death, before graduation or completion of high school, without transferring to another regular school.
Frequency of Perception	A measure of how frequently students perceived the school situation presented on a five point scale that ranged from All of the time (1) to Never (5).
Intensity of Perception	A measure of the degree to which students indicated that they were bothered by negative perceptions of school situations. Intensity was measured on a five point scale that ranged from A whole lot (5) to Not at all (1).
Overage Student	This was a student who was older than average for the school grade. For the purposes of this study, 13 years or older was considered overage for Grade Six and

14 or older was considered overage for Grade Seven.

Potential School Dropout — For the purpose of this study, a potential school dropout was defined as a student who in the judgement of the classroom teacher was in danger of not completing high school.

Non-Potential School Dropout — In this study, this term referred to any student, who in the opinion of his/her teacher, was likely to complete high school.

School Success — For the purposes of this study, success referred to positive outcomes associated with academic achievements as indicated by results on assignments, teacher tests, report cards, and in school competitions.

School Discipline — For the purposes of this study, school discipline referred to rewards and punishments employed by teachers and/or principals for maintaining control and dealing with student behavior.

School Work — This term referred to the subject matter and assigned work (including homework), undertaken by the students in school.

Teacher Attitudes	This referred to teacher likes and dislikes, which were the teacher affinities for and aversions to situations and students.
Teacher Behaviour	For the purposes of this study, this term referred to overt actions of the teacher within the classroom.
Teacher Expectations	This term was defined as beliefs that teachers held about the performance of the student.

Limitations of the Study

The empirical framework of this study was limited. Thus, it is of the greatest importance that the conclusions be viewed cautiously. More specifically in that regard, the following limitations should be noted:

1. The results are strictly speaking, valid within the specific conditions of the research, for example, the particular sample, the measuring instruments, and procedures used in obtaining the data.

2. This was a cross-sectional study and data elicited was not as complete as data gathered from a longitudinal study.

3. The results of the study was limited by the

statistics employed (descriptive statistics, MANOVA and One Way ANOVA).

CHAPTER II

Review of the Literature

The purpose of this chapter was to review the literature on the school-related variables under investigation in this study. Moreover, since this study focused also on student perceptions of these variables, the chapter includes a review of the literature in that area, as well.

In order to provide for a systematic review of the literature, this chapter was divided into six sections, as follows:

1. Current Focus on School-Related Factors
2. Research Based on Perceptions of the Students
3. Teacher Attitudes, Behaviours, and Expectations
4. School Discipline
5. School Work
6. School Success

Current Focus on School-Related Factors

A review of the literature indicated that there were three broad correlates of dropping out. Studies have correlated dropping out with family and social backgrounds, personal problems, and school-related factors.

Recently, however, there has been a focus of attention on the factors within the control of the school. Some researchers have, in fact, gone so far as to state that focusing on factors external to the school -- personal, family, social -- have been detrimental to finding solutions to the problem. Wehlage and Rutter (1986), in their article Dropping Out: How Much Do Schools Contribute to the Problem, stated that:

> The intent is noble; but the results have been negligible because the focus on social, family, and personal characteristics does not carry any obvious implications for shaping school policy and practice. Moreover, if the research on dropouts continues to focus on the relatively fixed attributes of the students, the effect of such research may well be to give schools an excuse for their lack of success with the dropouts. After all, it is not the school's fault that some of its students are from poor homes and not very talented academically, and since we cannot do anything about these things that interfere with school success, the school is absolved of responsibility for the fact that a

> sizable portion of its clients find good reasons to leave before graduation. (p. 376)

Research conducted by Rutter et al. (1979) in England and by Edmonds (1979) and his colleagues in the United States dared to question the conclusions reached by the Coleman (1966) Report which concluded that differences in school achievement were due to family background. Rutter et al. conducted a study of schools in London in which family background and personal characteristics were said to be controlled. One of the main research questions of the study was designed to determine if some schools were more effective than others after certain factors such as intelligence and family background were taken into account. Results from the Rutter study showed that "... children were more likely to show good behavior and good scholastic attainment if they attended some schools then if they attended others" (p. 77-78).

Edmonds (1979) did a similar study in the United States and also found that some schools were more effective than others in providing successful school experiences for all children regardless of socio-economic status. Implicit in both of these studies was the idea

that "schools do make a difference." Findings by Wehlage (1982, as cited in Peck, Law & Mills, 1987), showed that in fact "it is not the student's background but the school's response to it that determines success in school" (p. 9).

School-related reasons headed the list of reasons given for dropping out by a major local study Leaving Early (1984). The results of this study were supported by a number of other studies in which as high as 57 percent of the dropouts gave school-related reasons for dropping out (Anderson, 1982; Cipywnyk et al., 1983; Sewell, Palmo & Marne, 1981).

Radwanski (1987), in a more recent study, the Ontario Study of the Relevance of Education and The Issue of Dropouts, provided further evidence that school-related factors are emerging as the most important factor in causing students to drop out. The Decima and the Goldfarb research carried out for this study found that 43 - 45 percent of Ontario dropouts attributed school-related reasons for their decision to drop out (p. 86). Studies conducted in the United States, as cited by Radwanski, also revealed that 44 percent of the 5.8 million of the students who dropped out between 1979 and 1982 cited school-related reasons for dropping out.

Recently, researchers have identified school-related characteristics that effectively predict whether a youth will become a dropout. Wehlage and Rutter (1986, as cited in Durian, 1986), analyzed data from the "High School and Beyond" study and found evidence that low expectations about the amount of school a student will attain, low grades combined with disciplinary problems and truancy, were the most powerful determinants of dropping out (p. 6). These findings were supported by Rock (1985) and his colleagues (American Association of School Administrators), who analyzed the same data and concluded that school effects have equal impact on all pupils regardless of economic conditions. Another study conducted in the Boston schools demonstrated that certain types of discipline, truancy, and suspension policies, along with the types of responses of school personnel to students' learning and behaviour problems, were correlated with student alienation and dropping out (Massachusetts Advocacy Center, 1986).

Evidence from research then, have indicated that a focus on school-related factors is not only justified but also necessary if solutions are to be found. Research has suggested that the manner in which schools respond to students regardless of background, will largely determine

whether or not students become alienated from school and drop out. It is, therefore, necessary to concentrate on factors that are within the control of the school so that schools can more effectively respond to those at risk of dropping out.

Research Based on Perceptions of Students

Historically, one of the most neglected areas of research on the schooling process has been in the area of obtaining students' perceptions. In the past two decades, a growing interest in cognitive social psychology as it relates to the schooling process and an increased awareness of the reliability and potential value of students' perceptions have led to a greater interest in this area.

Educational studies commencing with the research of Thomas (1929) have been interested in the interactions that go on in the classroom. Until recently however, most studies have focused on measuring student and teacher overt behaviours. In the late 1940's, it was recognized that emotional factors influenced the interpersonal interactions in the classroom. Withall (1949) termed this interaction "social emotional climate" but he did not recognize the student's interactions to be as

important as the teachers. Thus, the focus remained on the teacher. This focus began to change in the 1970's when it became recognized that students' perceptions of the learning environment were useful in predicting achievement and in contributing to understanding the educational processes (Moos, 1979; Stern, 1970; Walberg, 1976). Since then, instruments which use the perceptions of students to evaluate their schools, teachers, and themselves have been developed and are used widely in identifying areas for improvement within schools. Some of these instruments including, the Quality of School Life Scale developed by Epstein and McPartland in 1976, and the Wisconsin Youth Survey developed by Wehlage, Stone and Rutter in 1979, have been used to provide data for planning improvement efforts related to potential school dropouts.

Since the 1970's, there has been an increasing interest in the field of cognitive social psychology and the school process. This interest evolved from the integration of the work of Brockover (1976), Rutter, Mischel, Bandura (1979) and others, who viewed behaviour as resulting from personal variables interacting with situational variables. The cognitive social psychology model assumes that a student's interactions with others

is the primary determinant of behaviour. The model places emphasis on the perception of the student who gives meaning to the stimuli by his/her unique way of processing incoming messages.

Developments in the field of social cognition has prompted interest in studying how students perceive their school experiences. A review of student perception literature, conducted by Weinstein (1983), testified to the large number of studies that have been conducted using student's interpretations of the classroom as a social environment. Weinstein cited numerous studies which have investigated student's perceptions of teacher attitudes, behaviours, expectations, causes of behaviour, self, classroom climate, and classroom processes. Weinstein stated that results from such research have pointed out that students are aware of the interactions that occur within the classroom, and are enormously sensitive to differential treatments by teachers. She also stated that students infer teacher expectations for their academic performance from differential treatment which in turn leads to self-expectations that match the teacher expectations (p. 302). She viewed the research that had been done up to that time, using student perceptions, as being valuable to educators by providing

information that could lead to improved teacher effectiveness.

Other researchers have also provided evidence on the value of research based on student perceptions. Whitfield (1976) stated that there was "ample evidence that students form clear perceptions of their teachers and that they can report behaviours responsible for these perceptions" (p. 350). Amatora (1952) and Symonds (1955) showed that students in middle grades and in high school were able to discriminate between teachers with regard to the quality of teacher-pupil interactions. Haak et al. (1972) had enough confidence in student perceptions to develop a group instrument to measure student perceptions of teachers even at the primary level. Baksh and Martin (1986) carried out extensive research on student perceptions of school and identified several important advantages of this method of data collection. Student perceptions provided them with insights into specific behaviours which they could not have gotten otherwise. They also found that students did not offer simplistic explanations of classroom interactions. They concluded that students' perceptions have important implications in that "knowledge of the students' view might well stimulate teachers and school administrators to inquire into why

students adhere to their particular perceptions ... Also, awareness of the student perspective will alert school personnel to fruitful directions for educational change" (p. 27).

Teachers: Attitudes, Expectations, and Behaviours

Teacher attitudes.

A review of the literature as related to teacher-student relationships suggested that much of the research conducted on this area failed to make clear distinctions between teacher attitudes, behaviours, and expectations. Many researchers, however, pointed out the importance of understanding underlying beliefs or attitudes of teachers, as these beliefs impacted on the way they behaved toward students (Brophy, 1979; Coppersmith & Feldman, 1974; Palardy, 1969; Seaver, 1973). Some researchers produced evidence that teacher attitude was related to teacher behaviour, which in turn had an impact on student perception and resultant student achievement. Davidson and Lang (1960) investigated the relationship between students' perceptions of teacher attitudes toward them and their feelings about themselves, their achievements, and their classroom behaviours. They found a positive relationship between perceived positive teacher

attitude and positive self-image, higher achievement, and more acceptable classroom behaviour as rated by teachers. Martin (1985), in Voices From the Classroom illustrated in his study of student perceptions toward school, the importance of teacher's attitudes toward students. In the Martin study, it was indicated that students perceived that a good relationship with the teacher was essential if one was to do well. "Relatedly, it has been implied that the teachers one can usually get along with are usually 'good teachers' and such teachers are necessary if one is to do well in school" (p. 59).

Other studies have produced less conclusive results on the relationship between teacher attitudes and achievements of students. Results from Gansneder's (1970) study indicated that teacher's attitudes made a difference on student achievement in 'poor black' schools but not in 'poor white' or middle class schools. A study conducted by Edmonds (1979) found contradictory results. This study reported that teacher attitudes were not related to the verbal achievement of poor black children, but were related to high achievement for white children and to a lesser extent for middle class black children.

Two recent studies conducted for the Ontario Study of the Relevance of Education and The Issue of Dropouts

(1987) produced evidence that dropouts perceived teachers as "less caring" that did school graduates. In the Goldfarb (1987) study, dropouts ranked their degree of satisfaction with "the degree to which teachers were interested in each student" as 44 out of a possible 100, while graduates gave teachers a rating of 58. The Decima (1987) study found similar evidence for the perceived indifference of teachers by dropouts. In the Decima study only 26 percent of dropouts perceived teachers as caring as compared to 45 percent of graduates.

The study, Leaving Early - A Study of Student Retention in Newfoundland and Labrador (1984), stated that one of the most important elements in the students' school life was the teacher. In that study, one hundred dropouts were asked what it was they would change in school if they had the power to do so. The response was unmistakably teachers' negative attitudes.

Teacher expectations and teacher behaviours.

Over the years research has produced considerable evidence on a positive link between teacher expectations and student achievement. The most controversial research in this area was Rosenthal and Jacobson's (1968) Pgymalion in the Classroom. That study reported findings

which suggested that the existence of a self-fulfilling expectancy bias led to differential treatment by teachers which resulted in improved performance by an experimental group in the classroom. Although later studies (Claiborne, 1969; Fleming & Anttonen, 1971; Jose & Cody, 1971) failed to replicate the results from Pgymalion, there was still a vast amount of evidence from research which suggested that teacher expectancy effects were related to student outcomes in the classroom (Cornbleth & Button, 1974; Good, 1970: Mendoza, Good & Brophy, 1971; Seaver, 1973; Tyo, 1972).

Positive findings from naturalistic studies using teachers' real expectations about their students, supported the self-fulfilling prophecy effects. A study by Jeter and Davis (1973) examined differential teacher behaviour related to teacher expectations of student academic achievement in fourth grade social studies classes. In this study, teachers were asked to rank students in order of expected achievements. The researchers then observed the quantity and quality of teacher interaction with these students. Results showed a significant difference in both the quantity and quality of teacher interactions which favoured the high expectancy students.

Mendoza et al. (1971) investigated differential teacher behaviour at the junior high school level. They found that low achievement students received less teacher contact than did high and middle-achievers. This finding was also supported by findings from a similar study conducted by Cornbleth et al. (1974) with senior high students.

Rist (1970) conducted a study on the effects of teacher expectations on the classroom behaviour of teacher and students. That study followed a single class of ghetto children through kindergarten and first and second grade. Results indicated that in kindergarten the teacher expectations and identification of "slow" and "fast" learners were based on social class membership. Data on classroom transactions indicated a marked difference in the teacher's attitudes and behaviours toward fast and slow learners and a consequent change in the behaviour of the slow learners. The study, however, was based on a small sample which limited its generalizability.

Brophy and Good (1974) reviewed earlier research in the area of teacher expectations and concluded that the self-fulfilling prophecy clearly operated in some classrooms but was not as widespread as had been originally

stated. In 1970, Brophy and Good proposed a model of the self-fulfilling prophecy. This model was reiterated again by Good (1981a) in Teacher Expectations and Student Perceptions: A Decade of Research. This self-fulfilling model, which guided his research, was as follows:

1. Teachers expected specific behavior and achievement from particular students.
2. Because of these varied expectations, the teacher behaved differently toward different students.
3. This treatment communicated to the students what behavior and achievement the teacher expected from them and affected their self-concepts, achievement motivation, and levels of aspiration.
4. If this treatment was consistent over time, and if the students did not resist or change it in some way, it would shape their achievement and behavior. High expectation students would be led to achieve at high levels, whereas the achievement of low expectation students would decline.
5. With time, student's achievement and

> behavior would conform more and more clearly to the behavior expected of them. (p. 416)

In his review of the research conducted, Good (1981) found that most of the research focused on number 2 (Did teachers treat high and low achieving students differently?). This was significant, as in order for the self-fulfilling prophecy to operate, expectations must have been translated into behaviours that communicated expectations to the students and shaped their behaviour toward expected patterns. Table 1 summarizes the findings of investigation by Braun (1976), Brophy and Good (1974), Cooper (1979), Good (1981b), Leacock (1969), Rist (1970), and Weinstein and Middlestadt (1979). These researchers identified specific ways in which some teachers treated high and low achieving students differently. It has been suggested that this differential treatment may be preventing many students from reaching their potential because teachers may have behaved in ways that tended to make their expectations come true and may have lowered their expectations for students who would otherwise have done better (Brophy & Good, 1973).

Table 1

Differential Student-Teacher Interaction Patterns

Instruction	Teacher Questioning and Feedback	Nonverbal Communication
1. Pay less attention to "lows" in instructional situations.	1. "Lows" receive less praise for successful performances.	1. "Lows" seated farther from the teacher.
2. Call on "lows" less frequently to respond.	2. "Lows" criticized more for incorrect responses.	2. "Lows" receive fewer positive non-verbal communications of warmth (smiles, eye contact, etc.) from teacher.
3. Wait less time for "lows" to respond.	3. "Lows" receive more praise for marginal or inadequate responses.	
4. More tolerance of non-attending behaviour from "lows".	4. "Lows" receive less feedback in terms of quantity, accuracy and specificity.	
5. Demand less work from "lows".		
6. Accepting lower performance from "lows".		
7. Ignore comments of "lows" more frequently.		
8. Less direct instruction for "lows".		
9. Interrupt performance of "lows" more frequently.		
10. Give "lows" less responsibility.		

Note: "lows" refers to students for whom teachers have low expectations.

Source: Braun (1979), Brophy and Good (1974), Cooper (1979); Good (1981), Leacock (1969), Rist (1970), and Weinstein and Middlestadt (1979).

Despite the vast amount of evidence that showed teachers can greatly influence student's achievements in the classroom, none of this data proved that teacher expectations were an influential determinant of student achievement. The research data have shown positive relationships that suggested teachers did contribute to poor academic achievement of many students. However, it must be remembered that these relationships were correlational rather than causal.

It must also be noted that the student-teacher relationship is a two way interaction, and as West and Anderson (1976) noted, it may be that student behaviour determined teacher expectation. West and Anderson noted that few researchers have investigated the student behaviour - teacher expectation relationship. Despite this, however, the link between teacher expectancies and student performance that has been established through research, and the evidence on differential teacher behaviour with low and high achieving students, justify continued research in the teacher expectancy area.

School Discipline: Effectiveness and Fairness

Some of the recent research on reasons for students dropping out of school have caused many to question if

their students are "pushouts" rather that dropouts. According to the study, Dropouts: A Review of the Literature: Project Team Search, conducted by Self (1985), problems with the discipline systems greatly contributed to the dropout rates. That study ranked discipline problems as one of the main reasons given by potential school dropouts and dropouts for leaving school early (Beacham, 1986; Peng & Takai, 1983; Rumberger, 1981; Stroughton & Grady, 1978; Thornburg, 1975).

Wehlage and Rutter (1986) acknowledged the link between low socio-economic backgrounds and discipline problems in the school, but maintained that despite this fact, it was crucial "to view the dropout problem as growing out of conflict with an estrangement from the institutional norms and rules that are represented in various discipline problems" (p. 381). They maintained that in order to reduce the dropout rate, educators will have to rise to the challenge to respond to the conflict that students from low socio-economic background experience with school.

Research conducted by Wehlage and Rutter (1982), attempted to determine the importance of social conditions encountered by students while in school as compared to fixed characteristics of the students in

dropping out. Results from this study indicated that the school received negative ratings on both. On Effectiveness of Discipline, Hispanics gave poor to fair rating to their schools; among Blacks, 52 percent of the stay-ins and 63 percent of the dropouts rated discipline effectiveness as poor or fair; and among White, 52 percent of the stay-ins and 50 percent of the dropouts rated this school factor as poor or fair. This data indicated that ineffectiveness of discipline was consistent across all three groups and there did not appear to be major differences in perceptions between stay-ins and dropouts.

The study indicated similar results on Fairness of Discipline. On this factor, Hispanics and Blacks both gave ratings of poor to fair, ranging from 56 to 61 percent for both dropouts and stay-ins in both groups. Fifty-nine percent of non-college bound Whites and 64 percent of the White dropouts rated Fairness of School Discipline as poor or fair. The overall findings suggested that "schools have a serious problem with how students perceive the discipline system" (Wehlage & Rutter, p. 383). These researchers also claimed that data from their study "suggest that school-related factors related to discipline are significant in developing a tendency to drop out" (p. 385).

The research on effective schools supported the view that fair discipline is an important variable in keeping at-risk students in school. Effective Schooling and At Risk Youth: What the Research Shows, a paper prepared by Druian (1986), examined the "fit" between techniques shown to be effective with at-risk youth and the conclusion reached by the effective school researchers. Druian concluded in this paper that "one of the strongest criticisms of schools made by dropouts is that the discipline is unfair and arbitrary" (p. 15).

School Work

The most recent statistics released by the Department of Education in Newfoundland revealed that approximately 52 percent of those who had left school prematurely in 1986-87 gave lack of interest in school as a reason for leaving (Education Statistics, 1988). Vast amounts of literature on school dropouts cited a lack of interest in school as one of the most prevalent reasons for dropping out (Beacham, 1980; Hewitt & Johnson, 1979; Peng & Tabal, 1983; Rumberger, 1981; Stroughton & Grady, 1978; Thornburg, 1975). Lack of interest was not always specifically defined in many of these studies but some researchers did relate lack of interest to school

subjects and school work.

Leaving Early: A Study of Retention in Newfoundland and Labrador (1984) found that students not liking school subjects did "indeed impact on decisions to leave school early." This study found that the dislike of school subjects increased with age and grade. Students ranged from a low of 12.0 percent in grade seven to a high of 30 percent in grade eleven on dislike of school subjects. The Leaving Early (1984) study cited several other earlier studies (Cipywnyk et al., 1983; Hohol, 1955; Watson, 1973) whose findings gave support to dissatisfaction with school programs or school subjects as a substantial reason for leaving school early.

Two studies on potential school dropouts, one conducted by Ahlstrom and Havighurst (1971) of Anglo and Black youths in Kansas City and another by Thornburg (1973) in Arizona primarily among Mexican-American and Indians, both used the same measurement instrument and found strong similarities on negative attitudes toward school. On the statement "People do not learn the things in school they want to learn", the Thornburg study reported 62 percent in agreement, while the Ahlstrom-Havighurst study reported 60 percent in agreement with that statement. On the questionnaire item "Too much of

what we have to study does not make sense", 49 percent of the potential school dropouts from the Thornburg study and 47 percent of the potential school dropouts of the Ahlstrom-Havighurst concurred with this statement. On the item which indicated boredom, 83 and 86 percent of the subjects from the respective studies agreed. The data from both of these studies may have been reflective of attitudes of minority groups in culturally deprived areas. However, it did serve to demonstrate that the lack of meaningfulness and purpose could well have been factors in dropping out.

A study conducted by Cipywnyk, Pawlovich, and Randhawa (1983), which did a comparison of dropouts, their parents, and teachers on reasons reported for dropping out, indicated that lack of meaningfulness and relevance of school work was a problem for dropouts. In this study 20 percent of dropouts, 13 percent of parents, and 16 percent of teachers reported lack of meaningfulness of school work was related to dropping out.

Earlier studies also indicated that lack of interest and purpose was a significant factor in influencing students to dropout. Pawlovich (1985) cited a study completed by Bowman and Matthews (1965) which reported that "dropouts did not see education as a means to

practical ends, did not see any intrinsic value in education and felt rejected by and had rejected school" (p. 45).

Difficulty with school work is another feature of school programs that has been correlated with students leaving school prematurely. In a study conducted by Fagan in the Task Force for Education (1979) in Newfoundland, the most frequently cited reason given for dropping out of school was difficulty with school work (p. 85). In this study, the five most reported reasons were related to perceived difficulty or perceived relevance of school subjects. More recent evidence contained in statistics released by the Department of Education in March, 1988 revealed that "Difficulty with Program" was rated as the second most prevalent reason given by dropouts in 1986-87 for dropping out.

School Success

Wehlage and Rutter (1986) in their research of students' school experiences that may contribute to dropping out, concluded:

> A central problem with schools today is that success is narrowly defined and restricted to

> the few at the top of their class ranking who are destined for college. Such a restricted notion of competence and success for youth is indefensible in terms of both the individuals involved and society as a whole. While proficiency in traditional academic subjects is important and serves to stimulate some youth, there are many more who should be encouraged to develop proficiency in other domains. (p. 391)

School success tends to be defined in the literature in terms of academic achievement, and academic achievement is commonly cited as one of the most highly rated reasons given for dropping out. In a review of the literature conducted by Self (1985), low academic achievement was cited as one of the greatest contributions to students leaving school early. This finding was supported by results from other major studies conducted both locally and internationally. The Leaving Early (1984) study conducted in Newfoundland, reported that 40 percent of the respondents listed academic failure as one of the main reasons for leaving school early and was overall the most frequently cited reason for dropping out (p. 23). High School and Beyond (1980), a longitudinal

study which involved 30,000 sophomores and 28,000 seniors from a national representative sample of 1,015 schools, confirmed the findings that academic failure was the most frequently given reason for dropping out. In this study, 36 percent of males and 30 percent of females cited "I had poor grades" as the primary reason for dropping out. Mahood (1981) reported that for many students dropping out seemed to be a reasonable way of removing oneself from the setting in which one was experiencing repeated failure.

Some researchers have concluded that schools largely determine success or lack of success for their students. Research done by Wehlage (1983) suggested that it was not the students's background, rather it was the school's response to it that determined success in school. Rutter et al. (1979) reported that the extent of opportunities students had to participate in activities in school was directly related to success. Often, school provided little opportunity for success for many students, especially those who were less capable academically, as success was typically seen in competitive terms as doing better than other students (Cohen, 1979; McClintock, 1978). McDaniel (1984) promoted cooperative learning as a way of reaching low achievers. He held the view that

"our public schools inadvertently created a large number of 'losers' by overemphasizing competition" (p. 47).

Summary

The studies that have been cited in this review provided evidence that school-related factors were certainly intertwined into the complex problem of students dropping out of school. The evidence presented by these studies, while not exhaustive, did suggest however, that students' negative perceptions of teachers, the disciplinary system, school work, and school success may have weakened bonds with the school. Knowledge of how students, especially those who are showing early signs of alienation, perceive school situations can provide educators with another way of looking at the problem. Insight into the reality of school for potential school dropouts may indicate to educators that some school practices and policies may be placing students at risk of dropping out of school.

CHAPTER III

Methodology

The purpose of this chapter was to present the design of the study and to describe the procedures used in conducting the research. This chapter is divided into the following sections: (a) General Statement of Procedure, (b) Sampling, (c) Data Gathering Procedures, (d) Instrumentation, and (e) Overview of Statistical Analysis.

General Statement of Procedure

The purpose of this study was to compare the differences in perceptions of four selected aspects of school life between sixth and seventh grade students who have been classified as either potential or non-potential dropouts. The aspects of school life that were studied were listed under the four broad categories of teachers, school discipline, school work, and school success. More specifically, there were eleven school-related variables studied. These variables were: (a) teacher attitudes, (b) teacher behaviours, (c) teacher expectations, (d) effectiveness of school discipline, (e) fairness of school discipline, (f) interest of school work, (g)

relevance of school work, (h) difficulty of school work, (i) satisfaction with school work, (j) expectations for school success, and (k) opportunities for school success.

The instrument used to gather students' perceptions had two dimensions -- a Frequency scale and an Intensity scale -- so that student responses could be recorded for frequency and intensity or degree to which negative perceptions could be bothersome.

Descriptive statistics were used to provide the insights into the nature of the differences in the total populations and between potential and non-potential dropouts. The answers to the four research questions presented in the study were provided by means of analysis of variance which tested the significance of the differences between potential and non-potential school dropouts on the Frequency and Intensity scales.

Sampling

Selection of the sample.

The participants in this study were a selected group of 768 Grade Six and Seven students from schools under the jurisdiction of the Roman Catholic School Board in the St. John's area. The following criteria were used to select schools for participation and to identify students

who would be subjects for this study:

1. Schools were identified in a variety of school settings. The participating schools, although not randomly chosen, were selected to provide a cross-sectional representation of schools within the St. John's area.

2. All Grade Six and Grade Seven students within the selected schools and who were present during the administration of the checklist were included in the sample.

3. All Grade Six and Seven classrooms within the designated schools were sampled.

Identification of potential and non-potential school dropouts.

The researcher found that one of the most challenging problems in conducting a study of potential school dropouts was the identification of this population of students. A review of the literature revealed that at present there is no one standard approach applicable to all situations.

One hundred and thirty four students were identified as potential school dropouts in this study. The procedure used for the identification process was based on

the following considerations:

1. Extensive research conducted on the characteristics of potential dropouts revealed that while many of the characteristics of potential dropouts were related to family, social background and personal attributes, there was a high proportion of these characteristics under the label of school related (Self, 1985). Students, therefore, could be identified on characteristics that were directly observable within the school.

2. The investigator accepted the conclusion of Wehlage and Rutter (1986) who stated that the process of dropping out was cumulative and was influenced by the institutional nature of the school.

3. In 1986, in response to the concern over the high dropout rate in the United States, the National Foundation for the Improvement of Education (NFIE) developed guidelines in their Operation Rescue: A Blueprint for Success which suggested key elements that should be incorporated into the identification process. These elements were:

(i) Teachers -- Teachers should be involved as members of the team identifying students at risk.

(ii) School Population -- Look at the total school population when identifying students at risk.

(iii) Objective Data -- Use objective data but do not be bound by it; beware of inaccurate data.

(iv) Creative Ways -- Find creative ways to identify at-risk students - use subjective means.

(v) Invisible Dropout -- Look for the invisible dropout -- those whose imagination have dropped out but their bodies are present (Operation Rescue, 1986).

4. Wells (1987), in a review of the identification systems that were currently being used to identify potential dropouts, noted some consistent threads emerging. It was noted that identification criteria tended to use profiles of students taken from characteristics of the dropout population, combined with particular localized characteristics. Wells noted that "local development of identification systems seem eminent" (p. 19).

5. Research has shown that teacher judgements have a high rating of predictive validity for the early identification of high risk children and for determining scholastic success (Keogh, Smith, 1970; Stevenson, Parker, Wilkinson, Hegion, Fish, 1976)

In recognition of the need to base the identification process on local characteristics, subjective as well

as objective data, behaviours observable within the school and teacher input, the following procedure was employed. First, homeroom teachers were requested to nominate students who, in their opinion, would be at risk of not completing high school. Teachers were asked to base their opinions on school-related characteristics that were observable within the school setting. It should be noted that Grade Six and Seven homeroom teachers typically spent a great proportion of their day with the homeroom class as there was little subject teaching at this level. It should also be noted that this study was conducted in May which gave the teachers maximum time to become familiar with their students. After nominating students, teachers were then asked to complete the Early Detection of At-Risk Students Checklist (see Appendix A) for each identified student. This checklist provided information that allowed the researcher to:

1. Collect local data on criteria used by teachers to identify potential school dropouts.

2. Compare the local criteria used for identification with that which have been reported in the literature.

3. Validate the local criteria used by cross refer-

encing the criteria with that which was based on empirical evidence.

The school-related characteristics that were listed on the Early Detection at At-Risk Students Checklist were taken from the literature and were reported to be characteristics of dropouts or at-risk students (see Appendix B). The characteristics listed were all school-related and directly observable within the school. The characteristics listed were: (a) has repeated a grade at least once; (b) little or no participation in extracurricular or special interest activities; (c) higher than average rate of discipline problems; (d) irregular attendance patterns; (e) difficulty in communicating with teachers or peers; (f) low or failing school grades; (g) expresses dislike for school; and (h) severe reading problems.

The six hundred and thirty four students who were not identified as potential school dropouts automatically made up the second group (non-potential school dropouts). No special measures were taken in the classification of this group.

Description of the sample.

Six schools were selected for participation in this

study. Schools were selected so as to provide a cross sectional representation of schools within the jurisdiction of the St. John's Roman Catholic School Board. For identification purposes, the schools were designed as School 1 through 6 throughout the study. Table 2 outlines the specific characteristics of each school by enrolments and type of organizational structure.

Profile of population.

Distribution of Potential and Non-Potential School Dropouts by Grade and Age. Table 3 illustrates the distribution of potential and non-potential school dropouts by grade and age. This table shows that 25 percent of the potential school dropouts samples were age 14 or older, whereas, only 2 percent of the non-potential school dropouts were age 14 or older.

Distribution of Potential and Non-Potential School Dropouts by School and Grade. Table 4 illustrates the distribution of potential and non-potential school dropouts by school and grade. This table shows that potential school dropouts were identified in each school included in the sample with higher proportions of potential school dropouts existing in schools #1 and #2. Both of these schools had lower enrollments than other schools

Table 2

Profile of Schools Sampled

School No.	#1	#2	#3	#4	#5	#6
Enrolment	405	548	725	819	594	362
Type[a]	K - 9	K - 12	4 - 12	K - 9	6 - 12	6 - 9

[a]Type refers to grade levels within the school.

Table 3

Profile of Potential and Non-Potential School Dropouts by Grade and Age

	Potential				Non-Potential			
	Grade				Grade			
Age	6	7	Total	%	6	7	Total	%
11 years	15	0	15	11	160	1	101	25
12 years	23	11	34	25	125	167	292	46
13 years	20	31	51	38	12	155	167	26
14 years	5	25	30	22	1	12	13	2
15 years	0	4	4	3	1	0	1	0
Total	63	71	134	99%	299	335	634	99%

Table 4

Profile of Potential and Non-Potential School Dropouts by School and Grade

	Potential			Non-Potential		
	Grade			Grade		
School	6	7	Total	6	7	Total
#1	8	12	20	31	29	60
#2	8	9	17	27	28	55
#3	5	12	17	47	60	107
#4	17	16	33	61	61	122
#5	21	12	33	71	75	146
#6	4	10	14	62	82	144
Total	63	71	134	299	335	634

sampled.

Distribution of Potential and Non-Potential School Dropouts by School and Gender. Table 5 illustrates the distribution of potential and non-potential school dropouts by school and gender. It is evident from this table that in all schools sampled, males were identified more frequently as potential school droputs than females.

Distribution of Potential and Non-Potential School Dropouts by Gender and Grade. Table 6 presents the distribution of potential and non-potential school dropouts by gender and grade. This table illustrates that more males than females were identified as potential school dropouts at both Grade Six and Seven levels. In addition, there was no significant difference in the number of potential school dropouts identified at the Grade Six and Seven levels.

Distribution of Potential and Non-Potential School Dropouts by Expectations to Finish High School. Table 7 shows students' responses to the statement "I expect to finish high school." This table illustrates that 15 out of a total of 134 of the potential school dropouts identified indicated expectations not to complete high school. This compares to only 1 out of a total of 634 non-potential school dropouts who indicated that they did

Table 5

Profile of Potential and Non-Potential School Dropouts by School and Gender

	Potential			Non-Potential		
School	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
#1	12	8	20	43	17	60
#2	14	3	17	22	23	55
#3	13	4	17	49	58	107
#4	20	13	33	59	63	122
#5	29	4	33	66	80	146
#6	11	3	14	83	61	144
Total	99	35	134	322	312	634

Table 6

Profile of Potential and Non-Potential School Dropouts by Gender and Grade

	Potential			Non-Potential		
Grade	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
6	52	11	63	146	153	299
7	47	24	71	176	159	335
Total	99	35	134	322	312	634

Table 7

Distribution of Potential and Non-Potential School Dropouts by Expectations to Finish High School

	Potential			Non-Potential		
Expecation[a]	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
YES	89	30	119	322	311	633
NO	11	4	15	0	1	1
Total	100	34	134	322	312	634

[a]Expectation refers to whether or not students expect to finish high school.

not expect to finish high school.

Profile of Potential School Dropouts Who Do Not Expect to Finish High School. Table 8 presents a profile by age of potential school dropouts who indicated they did not expect to complete high school. This table shows that 15 of the 134 students identified as potential school dropouts stated that they did not expect to finish high school. Ten of these students were less than 14 years old.

Profile of School-Related Characteristics Associated With Potential School Dropouts. Appendix C contains a profile of the school-related characteristics that teachers in this study indicated were demonstrated by the students whom they classified as potential school dropouts. This profile lists the characteristics, the number of students who demonstrated each characteristic, equivalent percentages, and ranking of each characteristic by frequency of occurrence.

Data Gathering Procedures

The initial contact for data collection was made with school board officials to elicit permission and support for the study (see Appendix D). The purpose, procedure for data collection, instrumentation, ethical

Table 8

Profile of Potential School Dropouts Who Did Not Expect to Finish High School

Age	Male	Female
11	0	0
12	2	0
13	6	2
14	3	1
15	0	1
Total	11	4

considerations, and data collection schedule were discussed and approved. School board officials granted permission for the researcher to make contact with school principals who, in turn, elicited teacher co-operation. Principals of each of the schools were contacted and the purpose of the study, process to be used in the identification of potential school dropouts, ethical considerations, instrumentation, and the procedure to be used in data collection were discussed. A letter was prepared and sent home to parents informing them of the study and to elicit their support (see Appendix E). Anonymity of participating students and schools was ensured. These efforts resulted in complete co-operation from teachers, parents, and students.

The identification of potential school dropouts and the administration of the student checklist took place over a two week period during the month of May, 1988. The researcher visited each of the Grade Six and Seven classrooms in participating schools, talked to homeroom teachers, and briefed them on the purpose of the study. In order to encourage honesty of student response and confidentiality, the researcher administered the questionnaire to the students in each of the classrooms in the absence of the teacher. The administration of the

checklist took approximately 30 minutes. During this period, homeroom teachers were given a break during which they were asked to identify students who, in their judgement, could be at risk of not completing high school. For each student identified, teachers were asked to complete an Early Detection of At-Risk Students Checklist.

During the administration of the Student Checklist the researcher first took time to build rapport and to establish the importance of the study with the students. Students were told that the checklist they were to complete was designed to capture their ideas and feelings about certain areas of school life. The researcher emphasized the value and importance of listening to what students said and felt about school. The researcher noted that without exception, students responded with seriousness to the completion of the checklist. Students also appeared to be pleased with the idea of having their ideas about school being taken seriously. Students were asked not to share their responses with other members of the class and were assured of complete confidentiality of their responses. This appeared to be of importance to the students.

During the administration of the Student Checklist,

the researcher carefully read the instructions, demonstrated a sample response, and then read through each item with the students to ensure that students with reading problems could complete the checklist without difficulty. This also provided the researcher with an opportunity to answer any questions concerning particular items of the checklist.

Instrumentation

This study utilized two instruments to collect data from teachers and students. The Early Detection of At-Risk Students Checklist (see Appendix A) was used to collect data on the school related criteria used by teachers in identifying at-risk students. The Student Checklist (see Appendix F) was used to collect data from students on their perceptions of selected aspects of school life. Both instruments were administered simultaneously.

The Early Detection of At-Risk Students Checklist consisted of a list of eight predominant characteristics that had been shown by the literature as being associated with dropouts and/or potential dropouts. Appendix B contains a documentation of research that support the use of these characteristics. Teachers were asked to

complete this checklist for each student they identified as at-risk. The checklist allowed the researcher to gather information on local criteria used in the identification process and compare this criteria with that which has been supported by empirical evidence.

The second instrument, the Student Checklist (see Appendix F), was uniquely formulated for the purpose of this study. Its design was based on the design of a checklist used by Applegate (1981) to study problems of secondary school students. The instrument was designed to capture both frequency and intensity responses and was recognized to have potential for identifying and describing the perceptions of students in this study. The items that comprised the Student Checklist were developed by the researcher to capture the perceptions of students on selected aspects of teachers, school discipline, school work, and school success. These aspects of school life were chosen for study because these were shown in the review of the literature to be problematic for students who have already dropped out and it was the intention of this study to investigate students' perceptions of those areas of difficulty prior to dropping out. The instrument was constructed of two scales, a Frequency scale and an Intensity scale, with 29 Likert

items on each scale. The Frequency scale measured the frequency of student perceptions of school situations on a five point scale on which a score of 1 indicated a positive response of All of the time and a score of 5 indicated a negative response of Never. The Intensity scale was composed of 29 items that complemented the items on the Frequency scale. This scale was intended to measure the extent to which students were bothered by their negative perceptions of school situations presented on the Frequency scale. The five point scale used to measure intensity ranged from indicating that the students were bothered a whole lot (5) to not at all (1) by negative perceptions of the school situations under study. During the administration of the Student Checklist, a few students indicated that they could not respond to an item on the Intensity scale when they had indicated that they "never" perceived this situation in school on the Frequency scale. For example, a student who had indicated on the Frequency scale that he/she "never" perceived school work to be difficult would not be able to respond to the accompanying item on the Intensity scale which would read "When I find school work difficult, it bothers me." This did not occur frequently but on such occasions, students were instructed not to

respond to the corresponding Intensity scale item.

To facilitate analysis of the data, the items on each scale were grouped to form eleven school-related variables. Appendix G outlines the distribution of items into the eleven variables under study.

The Student Checklist also contained five additional items which required the student to respond by either circling the appropriate letter or writing in a short answer. These five statements collected the following information: (a) student's name, (b) sex, (c), age, (d) grade, and (e) expect to finish high school -- yes or no?

Before the Student Checklist was administered to students, it was submitted to a number of experts for evaluation. The Instrument was evaluated on communication of ideas, clarity and appropriateness of language, sequence and organization of the items, and format for recording responses. Several language revisions resulted from this evaluation. Following these revisions, a field test was conducted on a small number of students (n = 8), ranging in age from 11 to 15. During this test the Student Checklist was administered individually to each of those students. The researcher noted the variance in the students' comments on items and in completion time. The researcher talked with each student upon completion

of the checklist to determine if any difficulties were encountered. Several minor revisions resulted from this field test. Overall, the students completed the checklist without difficulty and on average completed the checklist in 22 minutes.

Overview of Statistical Analysis

Upon completion of the collection of data, the categorization of students as potential and non-potential dropouts was undertaken. This involved the matching of each Early Detection of At-Risk Students Checklist completed by teachers with completed students' checklist by student name for each of the six schools. Each instrument was then coded for student response number and school so that each student could be identified. The student's gender, age, grade level, and response to the statement "I expect to finish high school" were also coded. After the data had been coded and entered, it was inspected for errors and corrected. A program was run to transform data entries on frequency items 1, 13, 18, 20, and 27 so that the rating from high to low would be consistent for all items.

The SPSSX computer program was utilized to provide the following analysis of data collected in this study.

Descriptive statistics.

The means and standard deviations for each of the eleven factors measured on both the Frequency and Intensity scales were computed for the entire population and for potential and non-potential dropouts. These statistics were also computed for students by gender, age, and school so that the nature of the differences of the groups in each category could be determined.

Analysis of variance.

1. One-Way Analysis of Variance. An One-Way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was used to provide answers to the four research questions presented in this study. The ANOVA computed differences in response scores between potential and non-potential school dropouts and determined whether significant differences occurred between the two groups on any of the eleven variables that measured the four areas of school life under study.

2. Multivariate Analysis of Variance. In order to get an overview of differences, especially significant differences, that could have resulted from influences other than dropout categorization, a Multivariate Analysis of Variance (MANOVA) was computed. This procedure facilitated the determination of significant

differences in student response scores that could have resulted from differences in gender, age, or school attended, or from a combination of these factors. The combinations analyzed in this study were: (a) Dropout Category x Gender, (b) Dropout Category x Age, and (c) Dropout Category x School. Dropout category distinguished between potential and non-potential school dropouts. Gender distinguished between 11, 12, 13, 14 and 15 year old students. School distinguished between school #1 through school #6.

Summary

This chapter has presented the design of the study and described the procedures used in conducting the research. The general statement of procedures, discussion of sampling and data gathering procedures, instrumentation and statistical analysis, in combination with accompanying tables, provided an in-depth decription of the methodology used in this study.

CHAPTER IV

Analysis of Data

Introduction

This chapter contains a detailed analysis of the data and is divided into five sections: Introduction, Overview of Measurement Procedures, Description of the Sample, Differences in Students Perceptions, and Summary. The chapter was designed to address each of the four research questions stated in Chapter One. Because each research question was concerned with the measurement of the differences in both the frequency and intensity of students' perceptions, two scales, one to gather a frequency score and the other to gather an intensity score, were used. The data collected on both of these scales were analyzed separately and reported that way in each section. Where appropriate, the results from the two scales were compared.

Overview of Measurement Procedures

The Student Checklist, the instrument used to collect data from students on their perceptions of the four selected aspects of school life, was composed of two scales. The first, a Frequency scale, was used to gather

information on the frequency of student responses which ranged on a continuum of 1 to 5. A response of 1 indicated that the student perceived the situation All of the time, while a 5 response indicated that the student Never perceived the situation. All items, except items numbered 1, 13, 18, 20, 22, and 27, were stated as positive situations. These items were recoded so that the scoring pattern could be consistent for all items. A high score on this scale indicated a low frequency of positive perceptions of the school situation and thus signified a negative perception of the variable. The second scale, an Intensity scale, measured the degree to which negative perceptions of the situations presented on the Frequency scale were bothersome to the students. Again, student responses were measured on a five point scale, where a 1 response indicated that the student was bothered not at all and a 5 response indicated that the student was bothered a whole lot. The higher the mean score on this scale, the greater the intensity or degree to which students appeared to be bothered by negative perceptions of situations stated on the Frequency scale. Scores on the two scales were independent as a high score on the frequency scale did not necessarily mean that the student would obtain a high score on the Intensity

scale. For example, potential school dropouts may have recorded more negative perceptions of a school situation on the Frequency scale but may also have indicated by their scores on the Intensity scale that they were not bothered greatly by negative perceptions.

Description of Sample by Dropout Category, Age, Gender, and School

This section provides descriptive statistics in the form of means and standard deviations for the population categorized by four main descriptors on all of the school-related variables under study. Means and standard deviations were provided for the total sample and for the entire population categorized as potential and non-potential school dropouts, by gender, age, and school attended on both the Frequency and Intensity scales. This shows how the students' responses are affected by the independent variables of dropout category, gender, age, and school attended and also shows the direction of the differences in responses in each category.

Dropout category.

1. Frequency of Students' Perceptions. Table 9 presents the means and standard deviations for the total

Table 9

Means[a] and Standard Deviations for the Total Sample and Subgroups on the Eleven School-Related Variables on the Frequency Scale

Variables[b]	Total (n = 768)		Potential (n = 134)		Non-Potential (n = 634)	
	Mean	S.D.	Mean	S.D.	Mean	S.D.
Teacher attitudes(25)	12.74	4.23	15.63	4.26	12.13	3.97
Teacher behaviours(25)	12.95	3.51	14.31	3.79	12.66	3.38
Teacher expectations(20)	10.24	2.84	11.59	2.96	9.96	2.73
School discipline(10) (effectiveness)	5.53	1.76	5.93	1.78	5.44	1.74
School discipline(15) (fairness)	8.57	2.63	9.72	2.62	8.33	2.57
Interest of school work(5)	2.94	.88	3.29	.92	2.86	.85
Relevance of school work(15)	7.61	2.42	8.49	2.65	7.43	2.33
Difficulty of school work(5)	2.83	.64	3.20	.65	2.75	.60
Satisfaction with school work(5)	2.43	.97	2.92	1.05	2.33	.93
Expectations for school success(15)	7.04	2.01	8.61	2.20	6.71	1.80
Opportunities for school success(10)	6.03	1.36	6.62	1.51	5.90	1.29

[a]The higher the mean score, the more negatively the variable was perceived

[b]Numbers in parentheses by each variable indicate the total possible score on each variable

sample and for potential and non-potential school dropouts on all of the eleven factors that comprise the four aspects of school life under study on the Frequency scale. As can be observed from this table, the means and standard deviations for potential school dropouts were higher than non-potential school dropouts on all factors. This indicates that potential school dropouts had more negative perceptions than non-potential school dropouts on all of the school related variables.

2. Intensity of Students' Perceptions. Table 10 records the results of the mean and standard deviation scores for the total sample and two subgroups (potential and non-potential school dropouts) on the eleven factors which measured selected aspects of school life on the Intensity scale. The results on this scale differed greatly from the results on the Frequency scale. Apparently, there existed very little difference between the intensity with which potential school dropouts and non-potential school dropouts perceived negatively stated situations on the school-related factors. This means that there was very little difference in the degree to which the two groups were bothered by negative perceptions on most of the variables. The largest difference recorded was on fairness of school discipline, where a

Table 10

Means[a] and Standard Deviations for the Total Sample and Subgroups on the Eleven School-Related Variables on the Intensity Scale

Variables[b]	Total (n = 768)		Potential (n = 134)		Non-Potential (n = 634)	
	Mean	S.D.	Mean	S.D.	Mean	S.D.
Teacher attitudes(25)	15.62	5.21	15.18	5.05	15.71	5.24
Teacher behaviours(25)	14.85	4.26	14.63	4.32	14.90	4.26
Teacher expectations(20)	11.37	3.83	11.36	13.79	11.37	3.85
School discipline(10) (effectiveness)	6.03	1.94	6.19	1.99	5.99	1.93
School discipline(15) (fairness)	11.20	2.81	10.28	3.10	11.39	2.70
Interest of school work(5)	3.59	1.25	3.75	1.24	3.55	1.25
Relevance of school work(15)	9.98	3.11	9.68	2.93	9.93	3.15
Difficulty of school work(5)	3.45	1.04	3.72	.96	3.39	1.05
Satisfaction with school work(5)	3.28	1.20	3.11	1.31	3.31	1.17
Expectations for school success(15)	10.97	2.55	10.39	2.90	11.09	2.45
Opportunities for school success(10)	4.43	1.79	4.51	1.89	4.42	1.77

[a]The higher the mean score, the more negatively the variable was perceived

[b]Numbers in parentheses by each variable indicate the total possible score on each variable

1.11 point difference in favour of non-potential school dropouts was recorded. Potential school dropouts recorded a .70 point gain over non-potential school dropouts on expectations for school success. Potential school dropouts also scored slightly higher than non-potential school dropouts on several other factors, specifically, effectiveness of school discipline, interest of school work, difficulty of school work, and opportunities for school success. These differences will be further discussed and analyzed for significance later in this chapter.

Gender.

1. Frequency of Student Perceptions. Table 11 clearly and consistently shows that the mean score for males was higher than for females on all variables except satisfaction with school work. This translates into males having more negative perceptions on all except this one school-related variable where females showed a slight gain of .44 in mean score.

2. Intensity of Students' Perceptions. Table 12 tabulates the mean scores for the sample by gender on the Intensity scale. These results reveal that females had higher mean scores on the variables teacher attitudes,

Table 11

Means[a] and Standard Deviations for the Total Sample and Subgroups by Gender on the Eleven School-Related Variables on the Frequency Scale

Variables[b]	Total (n = 768) Mean	S.D.	Male (n = 421) Mean	S.D.	Female (n = 347) Mean	S.D.
Teacher attitudes(25)	12.74	4.23	13.19	4.25	12.19	4.15
Teacher behaviours(25)	12.95	3.51	13.24	3.45	12.60	3.55
Teacher expectations(20)	10.24	2.84	10.38	2.73	10.07	2.95
School discipline(10) (effectiveness)	5.53	1.76	5.68	1.72	5.35	1.79
School discipline(15) (fairness)	8.57	2.63	9.02	2.72	8.03	2.40
Interest of school work(5)	2.95	.88	3.01	.90	2.85	.84
Relevance of school work(15)	7.61	2.42	7.72	2.52	7.49	2.30
Difficulty of school work(5)	2.83	.64	2.87	.65	2.77	.61
Satisfaction with school work(5)	2.43	.97	2.55	1.03	2.29	.88
Expectations for school success(15)	7.04	2.01	7.24	1.92	6.80	2.09
Opportunities for school success(10)	6.03	1.36	6.12	1.3	5.92	1.39

[a]The higher the mean score, the more negatively the variable was perceived

[b]Numbers in parentheses by each variable indicate the total possible score on each variable

Table 12

Means[a] and Standard Deviations for the Total Sample and Subgroups by Gender on the Eleven School-Related Variables on the Intensity Scale

Variables[b]	Total (n = 768) Mean	S.D.	Male (n = 421) Mean	S.D.	Female (n = 347) Mean	S.D.
Teacher attitudes(25)	15.62	5.21	14.92	5.20	16.47	5.11
Teacher behaviours(25)	14.85	4.26	14.33	4.32	15.48	4.11
Teacher expectations(20)	11.37	3.83	10.98	3.84	11.84	3.78
School discipline(10) (effectiveness)	6.02	1.94	6.00	1.93	6.05	1.94
School discipline(15) (fairness)	11.20	2.81	10.83	2.91	11.64	2.62
Interest of school work(5)	3.59	1.25	3.62	1.26	3.54	1.23
Relevance of school work(15)	9.89	3.11	9.96	3.13	9.79	3.09
Difficulty of school work(5)	3.45	1.04	3.51	1.04	3.37	1.04
Satisfaction with school work(5)	3.28	1.20	3.19	1.22	3.88	1.17
Expectations for school success(15)	10.97	2.55	10.53	2.59	11.50	2.41
Opportunities for school success(10)	4.43	1.79	4.30	1.81	4.60	1.76

[a]The higher the mean score, the more negatively the variable was perceived

[b]Numbers in parentheses by each variable indicate the total possible score on each variable

teacher behaviours, teacher expectations, effectiveness of school discipline, fairness of school discipline, satisfaction with school work, expectations for school success, and opportunities for school success. This indicates that females were more intensely bothered by negative perceptions of those school variables. Males, on the other hand, appeared to be more intensely bothered by the negative perceptions of interest of school work, relevance of school work, and difficulty of school work, as they achieved higher mean scores on these variables.

Age.

1. Frequency of Student Responses. The means and standard deviation scores on the Frequency scale of the total sample categorized by age (11 - 15 years) is presented in Table 13. This table illustrates a progression from lower to higher scores as age increased on all of the measured variables on the Frequency scale. These higher scores illustrated that older students held more negative perceptions of the measured variables than younger students. It is important to recall from Chapter III (Table 3) that the dropout sample had approximately 25 percent of its subjects in the age range of 14 - 15 years, while only 2 percent of the non-dropout population

Table 13

Means[a] and Standard Deviations for the Total Sample and Subgroups Categorized by Age (11 - 15 Years) on the Eleven Variables on the Frequency Scale

Variables[b]	Total (n = 768)		Age 11 (n = 176)		Age 12 (n = 326)		Age 13 (n = 218)		Age 14 (n = 43)		Age 15 (n = 5)	
	Mean	S.D.	Mean	S.D.	Mean	S.D.	Mean	S.D.	Mean	S.D.	Mean	S.D.
Teacher attitudes(25)	12.74	4.23	11.81	3.71	12.74	4.06	12.98	4.68	15.12	4.28	14.20	2.95
Teacher behaviours(25)	12.95	3.51	12.40	3.13	13.03	3.28	13.04	4.07	13.95	3.54	14.20	1.30
Teacher expectations(20)	10.24	2.84	9.90	2.74	10.04	2.68	10.51	3.04	11.53	2.88	12.40	2.30
School discipline(10) (effectiveness)	5.53	1.76	5.11	1.74	5.51	1.74	5.83	1.74	5.79	1.75	6.40	1.52
School discipline(15) (fairness)	8.57	2.63	8.24	2.55	8.57	2.50	8.72	2.90	9.07	2.33	9.60	2.97
Interest of school work(5)	2.94	.88	2.74	.83	2.96	.86	3.02	.92	3.09	.92	3.60	.89
Relevance of school work(15)	7.61	2.42	7.32	2.43	7.44	2.28	7.89	2.49	8.51	2.56	8.80	4.15
Difficulty of school work(5)	2.83	.64	2.75	.58	2.82	.60	2.86	.71	2.95	.61	3.80	.45
Satisfaction with school work(5)	2.43	.97	2.21	.93	2.45	.98	2.53	.98	2.72	.91	2.40	.89
Expectations for school success(15)	7.04	2.01	6.91	1.93	6.79	1.93	7.18	2.00	8.39	1.95	10.40	2.97
Opportunities for school success(10)	6.03	1.36	5.96	1.18	6.05	1.31	5.94	1.51	6.48	1.47	7.20	.84

[a]The higher the mean score, the more negatively the variable was perceived

[b]Numbers in parenthesis by each variable indicate the total possible score on each variable

were in the 14 - 15 years age range. Students' responses from this age range showed the greatest overall differences in scores from the total population mean.

2. Intensity of Student Responses. Table 14 contains the mean scores of students categorized by age (11 - 15 years) on all of the variables measured on the Intensity scale. Unlike the Frequency scale, a general pattern for the direction of student scores is not evident but there are several patterns that are of interest in this study. As can be observed from Table 15, younger students (11 - 13 years) had the highest mean scores on teacher attitudes, teacher behaviours, and teacher expectations. These higher mean scores indicate that this age group was more intensely bothered by perceptions of negative teacher attitudes, behaviours, and expectations than those from the 14 to 15 year old range. It is also clear from this table that eleven year olds appeared to be most intensely bothered by negative perceptions of effectiveness of school discipline and fairness of school discipline. This is evident in their higher mean scores on both of these variables. Another interesting pattern observable from Table 14 is the consistent increase in mean scores on interest of school work as student age increased from 11 to 15 years. Note-

Table 14

Means[a] and Standard Deviations for the Total Sample and Subgroups Categorized by Age (11 – 15 Years) on the Eleven Variables on the Intensity Scale

Variables[b]	Total (n = 768)		Age 11 (n = 176)		Age 12 (n = 326)		Age 13 (n = 218)		Age 14 (n = 43)		Age 15 (n = 5)	
	Mean	S.D.	Mean	S.D.	Mean	S.D.	Mean	S.D.	Mean	S.D.	Mean	S.D.
Teacher attitudes(25)	15.62	5.21	16.26	4.99	15.53	5.22	15.50	5.38	14.30	5.13	15.20	4.82
Teacher behaviours(25)	14.85	4.26	15.37	4.30	14.73	4.21	14.74	4.28	14.19	4.33	14.60	4.83
Teacher expectations(20)	11.37	3.83	11.63	3.70	11.80	3.93	11.34	3.91	10.53	3.26	9.40	3.05
School discipline(10) (effectiveness)	6.02	1.94	6.27	1.82	6.00	1.95	5.87	1.99	6.09	2.00	5.40	1.95
School discipline(15) (fairness)	11.20	2.81	11.89	2.55	11.24	2.71	10.94	2.81	9.44	3.53	10.20	3.11
Interest of school work(5)	3.58	1.25	3.43	1.23	3.52	1.25	3.72	1.26	3.95	1.13	4.20	.84
Relevance of school work(15)	9.89	3.11	9.60	3.11	10.03	3.06	10.02	3.19	9.32	3.05	9.40	2.88
Difficulty of school work(5)	3.45	1.04	3.40	1.12	3.46	1.00	3.42	1.05	3.63	1.02	3.80	1.10
Satisfaction with school work(5)	3.27	1.20	3.26	1.18	3.35	1.19	3.27	1.20	2.81	1.14	3.20	2.05
Expectations for school success(15)	10.97	2.55	10.97	2.28	11.19	2.57	10.84	2.60	10.00	2.91	10.40	3.29
Opportunities for school success(10)	4.43	1.79	4.59	1.85	4.50	1.77	4.21	1.69	4.44	2.15	4.00	2.00

[a]The higher the mean score, the more negatively the variable was perceived

[b]Numbers in parenthesis by each variable indicate the total possible score on each variable

worthy here, are the high scores of all age groups but particularly those of 14 and 15 year old students. These high scores reveal that these students were bothered greatly by their perceptions of school work as being boring. Difficulty of school work also appeared to be consistently bothersome to all age groups and most especially to the fourteen and fifteen year old group whose score on this variable exceeded the total sample mean of 3.45. It is interesting to note that the older students (age 14 - 15) did not score as high as younger students (age 11 - 13) on the variable expectations for school success. This would indicate that they were less bothered by their perceptions of low expectations for success in school. It is also interesting to observe that the 15 year olds in this sample had the lowest score on the variable, opportunities for school success. While the mean scores on all groups were low on this variable, the scores of fifteen year olds indicated that they were least bothered by negative perceptions of opportunities for school success.

School.

1. Frequency of Student Responses. A breakdown of students' mean and standard scores by school on the

Frequency scale is presented in Table 15. An examination of the mean scores in this table shows that overall, students who attended schools #3 and #5 frequently recorded scores higher than the overall mean scores. This indicated that students who attended schools #3 and #5 generally perceived school more negatively than students in schools #1, #2, #4, and #6.

2. Intensity of Student Responses. Table 16 provides an account of students' mean and standard scores by school on the Intensity scale. An examination of the results in this table reveals that, overall, students in schools #4, #5, and #6 had higher mean scores than students in schools #1, #2, and #3. This indicated that students in schools #4, #5, and #6 were more intensely bothered by negative perceptions of many of the aspects of school life measured than students in schools #1, #2, and #3.

Differences in Student Perceptions

The purpose of this section was to provide direct answers to each of the four research questions posed in Chapter I. The reader will recall that each of the research questions was concerned with determining whether or not significant differences in frequency and intensity

Table 15

Means[a] and Standard Deviations for Students Categorized by School/School Attended on All Measured Variables on the Frequency Scale

Variables[b]	Total (n = 768)		School #1 (n = 80)		School #2 (n = 72)		School #3 (n = 124)		School #4 (n = 155)		School #5 (n = 179)		School #6 (n = 158)	
	Mean	S.D.	Mean	S.D.	Mean	S.D.	Mean	S.D.	Mean	S.D.	Mean	S.D.	Mean	S.D.
Teacher attitudes(25)	12.74	4.23	12.65	3.85	12.35	4.21	13.63	4.83	12.45	4.14	13.46	4.34	11.73	3.64
Teacher behaviours(25)	12.95	3.51	12.67	3.13	11.89	3.74	13.21	3.70	12.88	3.51	13.34	3.59	13.00	3.27
Teacher expectations(20)	10.24	2.84	9.79	2.94	9.97	2.68	10.34	3.35	10.46	2.90	10.65	2.77	9.83	2.35
School discipline(10) (effectiveness)	5.53	1.76	5.74	1.56	5.60	1.72	5.88	1.96	5.23	1.75	5.50	1.73	5.44	1.72
School discipline(15) (fairness)	8.57	2.63	8.15	2.61	8.03	2.31	9.16	2.87	8.55	2.55	8.70	2.62	8.44	2.61
Interest of school work(5)	2.94	.88	2.89	.84	2.72	.88	3.14	.90	2.78	.82	2.98	.80	3.01	.87
Relevance of school work(15)	7.61	2.42	7.06	2.53	7.38	2.26	8.35	2.53	7.33	2.33	7.68	2.52	7.61	2.20
Difficulty of school work(5)	2.83	.64	2.85	.70	2.81	.66	2.68	.62	2.87	.61	2.99	.63	2.72	.59
Satisfaction with school work(5)	2.43	.97	2.33	.85	2.26	.90	2.54	1.09	2.38	.87	2.58	1.03	2.37	.97
Expectations for school success(15)	7.04	2.01	7.61	2.13	7.03	1.85	7.01	2.06	7.10	1.88	7.21	2.11	6.56	1.92
Opportunities for school success(10)	6.03	1.36	6.16	1.31	5.70	1.33	5.99	1.45	5.94	1.40	6.07	1.33	6.18	1.30

[a]The higher the mean score, the more negatively the variable was perceived

[b]Numbers in parenthesis by each variable indicate the total possible score on each variable

Table 16

Means[a] and Standard Deviations for Students Categorized by School/School Attended on All Measured Variables on the Intensity Scale

Variables[b]	Total (n = 768)		School #1 (n = 80)		School #2 (n = 72)		School #3 (n = 124)		School #4 (n = 155)		School #5 (n = 179)		School #6 (n = 158)	
	Mean	S.D.	Mean	S.D.	Mean	S.D.	Mean	S.D.	Mean	S.D.	Mean	S.D.	Mean	S.D.
Teacher attitudes(25)	15.62	5.21	15.14	4.70	14.65	5.12	13.35	5.40	16.30	5.14	16.20	4.99	16.75	5.09
Teacher behaviours(25)	14.85	4.26	14.46	3.98	13.36	4.48	13.72	4.39	15.06	4.04	15.67	4.07	15.48	9.31
Teacher expectations(20)	11.37	3.83	10.74	3.86	10.38	3.74	10.48	4.09	12.10	3.70	11.69	3.68	11.77	3.75
School discipline(10) (effectiveness)	6.02	1.94	5.28	1.68	5.71	1.99	5.69	2.11	6.12	1.76	6.43	1.85	6.25	2.00
School discipline(15) (fairness)	11.20	2.81	10.85	2.83	10.51	2.85	10.67	3.14	11.67	2.26	11.28	2.69	11.53	2.70
Interest of school work(5)	3.58	1.25	3.49	1.37	3.19	1.33	3.44	1.24	3.53	1.18	3.75	1.20	3.79	1.22
Relevance of school work(15)	9.88	3.11	9.74	3.11	9.22	3.08	9.43	3.05	9.53	2.98	10.44	3.13	10.33	3.15
Difficulty of school work(5)	3.45	1.04	3.49	1.15	3.22	1.01	3.41	.99	3.45	1.03	3.57	1.00	3.42	1.10
Satisfaction with school work(5)	3.27	1.20	3.20	1.21	3.15	1.26	3.10	1.17	3.39	1.12	3.28	1.22	3.38	1.22
Expectations for school success(15)	10.97	2.55	10.10	2.67	10.76	2.59	10.41	2.76	11.08	2.40	11.37	2.40	11.39	2.44
Opportunities for school success(10)	4.43	1.79	3.95	1.67	4.17	1.61	3.97	1.77	4.59	1.72	4.66	1.84	4.76	1.84

[a]The higher the mean score, the more negatively the variable was perceived

[b]Numbers in parenthesis by each variable indicate the total possible score on each variable

of perception existed between potential and non-potential school dropouts on the four selected aspects of school life under investigation. These four aspects of school life were: teachers, school discipline, school work, and school success. The research questions more specifically defined these four aspects of school life as eleven school-related variables that were to be investigated. These eleven variables were teacher attitudes, teacher behaviours, teacher expectations, effectiveness of school discipline, fairness of school discipline, interest of school work, relevance of school work, difficulty of school work, satisfaction with school work, expectations for school success, and opportunities for school success.

An analysis of the differences between potential and non-potential school dropouts response scores was computed by means of One Way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA). Multivariate Analysis of Variance (MANOVA) was also used to determine if significant differences occurred in student responses when the sample was categorized by gender, age, school, and by combinations of these categories. These differences, while not the main focus of this study, were of interest and were discussed in relation to each research question. They were viewed as possible areas for further study.

Research question #1.

Are there significant differences in frequency and intensity of perceptions between potential and non-potential school dropouts on teacher attitudes, teacher behaviours, and teacher expectations?

1. Differences in Frequency of Students' Perceptions on Teachers. Table 17 presents the means, standard deviations and analysis of variance (F score) for potential and non-potential school dropouts' perceptions of teacher attitudes, behaviours and expectations on the Frequency scale. The results shown in this table indicate that significant differences did exist in how potential and non-potential school dropouts perceived teacher attitudes, behaviours, and expectations. The higher mean score on these variables by potential school dropouts indicate that they had more negative perceptions of teacher attitudes, behaviours, and expectations than non-potential school dropouts.

Table 18 shows the significance of the differences in the frequency of student response scores produced by other independent variables both individually and in combination with each other. This table indicates that the differences in students perceptions of teacher attitudes were significantly influenced by gender and age

Table 17

Analysis of Variances on Perceptions of Teachers on the Frequency Scale

Variables[a]	Potential (n = 134) Mean[b]	S.D.	Non-Potential (n = 634) Mean[b]	S.D.	F Score
Attitudes(25)	15.63	4.26	12.13	3.97	84.07*
Behaviours(20)	14.31	3.79	12.66	3.38	25.24*
Expectations(20)	11.59	2.96	9.96	2.73	38.44*

[a]Numbers in parentheses by each variable indicate the possible score on each variable

[b]The higher the mean score the more negatively the variable was perceived

*Indicates significant difference at .05 level of confidence

Table 18

Multivariate Analysis of Variance -- Teachers -- Frequency Scale

	Teacher Attitude	Teacher Behaviour	Teacher Expectations
Gender	10.740**	5.925**	2.260
Age	6.019**	2.270*	4.533*
School	3.831*	1.944	2.063
Dropout Category X Gender	.067	1.515	.007
Dropout Category X Age	1.455	1.455	3.396**
Dropout Category X School	1.219	.509	1.234

*Significant at the .05 level

**Significant at .01 level

of the student and by the school which the student attended. Students' perceptions of teacher behaviours were influenced by gender, while perceptions of teacher expectations were influenced by age, as well as the combination of dropout category and age. It was pointed out in the previous section that males held more negative perceptions on both teacher attitudes and teacher behaviours. It was also found that as age increased so did the frequency of negative perceptions on teacher attitudes, behaviours, and expectations. The fact that the potential school dropout group was composed of proportionally more older students (14 - 15 year olds) than the non-dropout group, would then account for significant differences on teacher expectations by dropout category and age.

2. Differences in the Intensity of Students' Perceptions on Teachers. Table 19 shows the means, standard deviations, and analysis of variances for potential and non-potential school dropouts' perceptions on teacher attitudes, teacher behaviours, and teacher expectations, as measured on the Intensity scale of the Student Checklist. The results in Table 19 indicate that there were no significant differences in the intensity of perceptions between potential and non-potential school

Table 19

Analysis of Variances on Perceptions of Teachers on the Intensity Scale

Variables[a]	Potential (n = 134) Mean[b]	S.D.	Non-Potential (n = 634) Mean[b]	S.D.	F Score
Attitudes(25)	15.18	5.05	15.71	5.24	1.154
Behaviours(20)	14.63	4.32	14.90	4.26	.445
Expectations(20)	11.36	3.79	11.37	3.85	.002

[a]Numbers in parentheses by each variable indicate the possible score on each variable

[b]The higher mean score indicates that the students were more bothered by negative perceptions

dropouts on teacher attitudes, behaviours, and expectations. This suggests that potential school dropouts were not significantly different from non-potential school dropouts in the degree to which they were bothered by negative perceptions of teacher attitudes, behaviours, and expectations.

Other independent variables that had significant influences on student responses to items that measured intensity of student perceptions of teacher attitudes, behaviours, and expectations are shown in Table 20. Results produced by MANOVA revealed that the degree to which students were bothered by negative perceptions of teacher attitudes, behaviours, and expectations was significantly influenced by the gender of the student and the school which the student attended. It is interesting to recall from the description of the sample that males had more frequent negative perceptions of teachers in general but females were more intensely bothered by negative perceptions of teacher attitudes, behaviours, and expectations.

Research questions #2.

Are there significant differences in frequency and intensity of perceptions between potential and non-poten-

Table 20

Multivariate Analysis of Variance -- Teachers -- Intensity Scale

	Teacher Attitude	Teacher Behaviour	Teacher Expectations
Gender	15.843**	13.618**	9.186**
Age	1.320**	.986*	1.011
School	8.094*	5.843**	4.813**
Dropout Category X Gender	.0.58	.004	.841
Dropout Category X Age	1.124	.915	1.070
Dropout Category X School	.809	1.519	.967

*Significant at the .05 level

**Significant at .01 level

tial school dropouts on effectiveness and fairness of school discipline?

1. Frequency of Students' Perceptions on School Discipline. Table 21 presents the means, standard deviations, and analysis of variances (F scores) for potential and non-potential school dropouts' perceptions of effectiveness and fairness of school discipline on the Frequency scale. The results produced by the Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) showed that potential school dropouts differed significantly from non-potential school dropouts in the frequency of their perceptions of effectiveness and fairness of school discipline. The higher mean scores by potential school dropouts suggest that this group perceived effectiveness and fairness of school discipline more negatively than non-potential school dropouts.

Table 22 shows that gender, age, and school attended also exerted some significant influences on how students perceived effectiveness and fairness of school discipline, as measured on the Frequency scale. The results of the MANOVA recorded in this table illustrated that the age of the student significantly influenced response scores on the variable, effectiveness of school discipline, while the scores on fairness of school discipline

Table 21

Analysis of Variances on Perceptions of School Discipline on the Frequency Scale

Variables[a]	Potential (n = 134) Mean[a]	S.D.	Non-Potential (n = 634) Mean[a]	S.D.	F Score
Effectiveness (10)	5.93	1.78	5.44	1.74	8.66*
Fairness(15)	9.73	2.62	8.33	2.57	32.47*

[a]Numbers in parentheses by each variable indicate the possible score on each variable

[b]The higher the mean score the more negatively the variable was perceived

*Indicates significant difference at .05 level of confidence

Table 22

Multivariate Analysis of Variance -- School Discipline -- Frequency Scale

	Effectiveness of School Discipline	Fairness of School Discipline
Gender	6.454	27.129**
Age	4.779**	1.403
School	2.212	2.473*
Dropout Category X Gender	.648	.001
Dropout Category X Age	.513	2.141
Dropout Category X School	.572	.369

*Significant at the .05 level

**Significant at .01 level

were shown to vary significantly with the gender of the student and the school attended. A review of the description of the sample by age will indicate that 13 to 15 year olds had the most negative perceptions of effectiveness of school discipline with 15 year olds appearing to be the most negative.

2. Intensity of Students' Perceptions of School Discipline. Table 23 shows the means, standard deviations, and analysis of variances for potential and non-potential school dropouts' perceptions on effectiveness and fairness of school discipline as measured on the Intensity scale of the Student Checklist. The results of the analysis of variance (ANOVA) as shown by the F scores in the table indicate that there was a significant difference in the intensity of perceptions between potential and non-potential school dropouts on fairness of school discipline but not on effectiveness of school discipline. The mean scores attained by potential and non-potential school dropouts on fairness of school discipline showed that non-potential school dropouts achieved a higher mean score on this variable and thus appeared to be significantly more bothered by negative perceptions of fairness of school discipline than did potential school dropouts.

Table 23

Analysis of Variances on Perceptions of School Discipline on the Intensity Scale

	Potential (n = 134)		Non-Potential (n = 634)		F
Variables[a]	Mean[b]	S.D.	Mean[b]	S.D.	Score
Effectiveness (10)	6.19	1.99	5.99	1.93	1.333
Fairness (15)	10.28	3.10	11.39	2.70	17.845*

[a]Numbers in parentheses by each variable indicate the possible score on each variable

[b]The higher mean score indicates that the students were more bothered by negative perceptions

*Indicates significant difference at .05 level of confidence

Results of the MANOVA which were computed by the sample categorized by gender, age, and school, both individually and collectively, indicated that some of these independent variables had a significant influence on student response scores. Table 24 illustrates that student perceptions of effectiveness of school discipline varied significantly according to school attended. Table 24 also shows that gender, age, and school attended were significant factors in determining student response scores on the variable, fairness of school discipline. In the description of the population by gender, age, and school in the previous section, it was demonstrated that females, eleven year olds, and students attending schools #4, #5, and #6 were most bothered by negative perceptions of both fairness and effectiveness of school discipline.

Research question #3.

Are there significant differences in frequency and intensity of perceptions between potential and non-potential school dropouts on school work, more specifically, interest of school work, relevance of school work, difficulty of school work, and satisfaction with school work?

1. Differences in Frequency of Perceptions of

Table 24

Multivariate Analysis of Variance -- School Discipline -- Frequency Scale

	Effectiveness of School Discipline	Fairness of School Discipline
Gender	.227	15.469**
Age	1.447	7.618**
School	5.598**	3.338**
Dropout Category X Gender	1.327	.015
Dropout Category X Age	1.114	1.348
Dropout Category X School	.401	1.659

*Significant at the .05 level

**Significant at .01 level

School Work. Table 25 presents the means, standard deviations, and analysis of variances for potential and non-potential school dropouts' perceptions of school work, as measured on the Frequency scale. The results of the ANOVA as indicated by the F score demonstrate that there was a significant difference in the frequency with which potential and non-potential school dropouts perceived interest of school work, relevance of school work, difficulty of school work, and satisfaction with school work. The higher mean score recorded by potential school dropouts in this table indicated that potential school dropouts had more negative perceptions of school work than non-potential school dropouts.

The individual and collective influence of gender, age, and school are shown in Table 26. The results of the MANOVA tabulated in this table showed that student gender had significant influence on how students perceived interest of school work, difficulty of school work, and satisfaction with school work as measured on the Frequency scale. Age was shown to be a significant factor in response scores for all four variables -- interest of school work, relevance of school work, difficulty of school work, and satisfaction with school work -- that measured students' perceptions of school work on

Table 25

Analysis of Variances on Perceptions of School Work on the Frequency Scale

Variables[a]	Potential (n = 134) Mean[b]	S.D.	Non-Potential (n = 634) Mean[b]	S.D.	F Score
Interest(5)	3.29	.92	2.86	.85	27.22*
Relevance(15)	8.49	2.65	7.43	2.33	21.70*
Difficulty(5)	3.20	.65	2.75	.60	60.46*
Satisfaction(5)	2.92	1.05	2.33	.93	41.67*

[a]Numbers in parentheses by each variable indicate the possible score on each variable

[b]The higher the mean score the more negatively the variable was perceived

*Indicates significant difference at .05 level of confidence

Table 26

Multivariate Analysis of Variance -- School Work -- Frequency Scale

	Interest	Relevance	Difficulty	Satisfaction
Gender	6.536*	1.781	5.126*	13.779**
Age	3.656**	3.398**	4.173*	3.923**
School	3.515**	3.693**	4.982**	2.005
Dropout Category X Gender	.170	.375	.004	.810
Dropout Category X Age	.216	2.362	.874	2.173
Dropout Category X School	.662	.719	2.201	.836

*Significant at the .05 level

**Significant at .01 level

the Frequency scale. Students' perceptions of interest of school work, relevance of school work, and difficulty of school work was also shown in Table 26 to be significantly influenced by school attended. These statistics when viewed in light of the descriptive statistics on the population in the previous section reveal that males recorded more negative perceptions on all school work variables except satisfaction with school work. This finding also shows that negative perceptions on all variables increased with age and appeared to be more prevelant in some schools than in others.

2. Differences in Intensity of Students' Perceptions of School Work. Table 27 is composed of mean, standard deviation, and analysis of variance scores for potential and non-potential school dropouts' perceptions on the variables that measured school work -- interest of school work, relevance of school work, difficulty of school work, and satisfaction with school work. The results of the ANOVA, as indicated by the F scores in this table, reveal that there were no significant differences in the intensity of students' perceptions on the variables, interest of school work and satisfaction with school work. Table 27 does show, however, that there was a significant difference in the intensity of potential

Table 27

Analysis of Variances on Perceptions of School Work on the Intensity Scale

Variables[a]	Potential (n = 134) Mean[b]	S.D.	Non-Potential (n = 634) Mean[b]	S.D.	F Score
Interest(5)	3.79	1.24	3.55	1.254	2.961
Relevance(15)	9.68	2.93	9.93	3.15	.714
Difficulty(5)	3.27	.96	3.39	1.05	11.294*
Satisfaction(5)	3.11	1.31	3.31	1.17	3.047

[a]Numbers in parentheses by each variable indicate the possible score on each variable

[b]The higher the mean score the more bothersome the variable was perceived

*Indicates significant difference at .05 level of confidence

and non-potential school dropouts' perceptions on the variable, difficulty of school work. The higher means score of potential school dropouts on this variable suggest that potential school dropouts were more bothered by negative perceptions on the variable, difficulty of school work than non-potential school dropouts.

Table 28 shows that gender, age, and school attended appeared to have a significant influence on the intensity of students' perceptions on several variables that measured school work. Student gender, as discussed in the description of the sample, and as shown in this table, significantly influenced students' response scores on the variable, satisfaction with school work. As revealed in the previous section, females indicated that they were more intensely bothered by negative perceptions of satisfaction with school work. Age significantly impacted upon students' response scores on the variable, interest of school work and school attended appeared to be a significant factor in determining student responses on the variables, interest of school work and relevance of school work. It was interesting to note from the mean scores presented earlier that older students indicated that they were bothered greatly by negative perceptions of interest of school work. This was shown to be part-

Table 28

Multivariate Analysis of Variance -- School Work -- Intensity Scale

	Interest	Relevance	Diff-iculty	Satis-faction
Gender	.794	.895	3.755	4.836*
Age	2.947*	1.102	.612	1.856
School	3.381**	3.384**	1.161	1.173
Dropout Category X Gender	1.596	1.840	.092	1.920
Dropout Category X Age	1.481	.527	.705	2.171
Dropout Category X School	.419	.515	.730	1.376

*Significant at the .05 level

**Significant at .01 level

icularly true for 14 and 15 year olds. It is also interesting to recall from the descriptive statistics that students in schools where negative perceptions toward school work were recorded more frequently, also indicated that they were more intensely bothered by these negative perceptions.

Research question #4.

Are there significant differences in frequency and intensity of perceptions between potential and non-potential school dropouts on expectations and opportunities for school success?

1. Differences in Frequency of Students' Perceptions on School Success. Mean, standard deviation, and analysis of variance scores for potential and non-potential school dropouts on perceptions of expectations and opportunities for school success are compiled in Table 29. This table shows that there were significant differences in frequency of perceptions between potential and non-potential school dropouts on the variables, expectations for school success and opportunities for school success, as measured on the Frequency scale of the Student Checklist. The table shows that potential school dropouts recorded higher scores on both variables. This

Table 29

Analysis of Variances on Perceptions of School Success on the Frequency Scale

	Potential (n = 134)		Non-Potential (n = 634)		F
Variables[a]	Mean[b]	S.D.	Mean[b]	S.D.	Score
Expectations(15)	8.61	2.20	6.71	1.80	113.19*
Opportunities (10)	6.62	1.51	5.90	1.29	32.04*

[a]Numbers in parentheses by each variable indicate the possible score on each variable

[b]The higher the mean score the more negatively the variable was perceived

*Indicates significant difference at .05 level of confidence

indicates that potential school dropouts had more negative perceptions of expectations for school success and opportunities for school success than non-potential school dropouts.

Table 30 contains the results of the MANOVA which showed the influence of other independent variables, both individually and collectively, on the frequency of students' perceptions of school success. As shown in Table 30, students perceptions of expectations for school success were significantly influenced by gender and age of the student, the school attended, as well as the combination of dropout category and age. Students' perceptions of opportunities for school success, as measured on the Frequency scale, was significantly affected by gender, age, and the combination of dropout category and gender. The influence of gender and age for both expectations for school success and opportunities for school success followed the same pattern observed on the other variables. Given the descriptive data recorded in the previous section, it would appear that significant differences that showed up due to age and gender on expectations for school success and opportunities for school success resulted from the more negative perceptions held by male and overage students. In an effort to

Table 30

Multivariate Analysis of Variance -- School Success -- Frequency Scale

	Expectations for School Success	Opportunities for School Success
Gender	9.130**	4.780*
Age	10.265**	2.620*
School	3.173*	1.585
Dropout Category X Gender	.203	4.247**
Dropout Category X Age	6.089**	1.023
Dropout Category X School	.651	.703

*Significant at the .05 level

**Significant at .01 level

understand the significant influence of school on expectations for school success, it is interesting to note from descriptive statistics tabulated in the previous section that students attending certain schools recorded lower expectations for school success than those attending others. This finding would certainly be an interesting area for further study. It is not surprising to note from Table 30 that significant differences resulted from the interaction of Dropout Category x Gender on the variable, opportunity for school success and Dropout Category x Age on the variable, expectations for school success. The high proportion of males and overage students that was shown to comprise the dropout category in Chapter III (Tables 3 and 5) would account for some of these differences.

2. Differences in Intensity of Students' Perceptions of School Success. Table 31 contains means, standard deviations and analysis of variances for potential and non-potential school dropouts' perceptions on the variable, expectations for school success and opportunities for school success. The F scores reveal that there was a significant difference in the intensity with which potential and non-potential school dropouts perceived expectations for school success but no significant

Table 31

Analysis of Variances on Perceptions of School Success on the Intensity Scale

	Potential (n = 134)		Non-Potential (n = 634)		F
Variables[a]	Mean[b]	S.D.	Mean[b]	S.D.	Score
Expectation(15)	10.39	2.90	11.09	2.45	8.5333*
Opportunities (10)	4.51	1.89	4.42	1.77	.325

[a]Numbers in parentheses by each variable indicate the possible score on each variable

[b]The higher the mean score the more negatively the variable was perceived

*Indicates significant difference at .05 level of confidence

difference in the intensity with which they perceived opportunities for school success. The higher mean score of non-potential school dropouts on expectation for school success indicates that this group was more intensely bothered by negative perceptions of this variable.

Table 32 records the influence of gender, age, and school, both individually and collectively, on the intensity of students perceptions on school success. The table shows that student gender and school attended significantly influenced student responses on both variables, expectations for school success and opportunities for school success. From the mean scores tabulated in the previous section, it can be seen that these significant differences would result from females and students attending schools #4, #5, and #6 being more intensely bothered by negative perceptions of expectations for school success and opportunities for school success. The interaction of dropout category and student gender was indicated to have a significant influence on perceived opportunities for school success as measured on the Intensity scale. This suggests that male and female potential school dropouts differed significantly from male and female non-potential school dropouts in the

Table 32

Multivariate Analysis of Variance -- School Success -- Intensity Scale

	Expectations for School Success	Opportunities for School Success
Gender	29.048**	5.348*
Age	2.241	1.315
School	4.727**	5.033**
Dropout Category X Gender	.319	7.908**
Dropout Category X Age	2.187	1.136
Dropout Category X School	.523	1.296

*Significant at the .05 level

**Significant at .01 level

degree to which they were bothered by negative perceptions on the variable, opportunities for school success.

Summary

The analysis of data in this chapter provided by means of descriptive statistics and analysis of variance computed by the ANOVA and MANOVA procedures provided answers to the four research questions posed in this study. These questions were focused on determining whether significant differences existed in the frequency and intensity of perceptions between potential and non-potential school dropouts on four selected areas of school life. Differences in the population due to gender, age, school attended or a combination of these factors, while not of main concern to this study, were of interest and also reported in this section.

The most important finding resulting from the analysis of data was that potential and non-potential school dropouts at the sixth and seventh grade level differed significantly in their perceptions of teachers, school discipline, school work, and school success. It was found that potential school dropouts perceived all eleven school-related variables that defined these four aspects of school life, more negatively than non-poten-

tial school dropouts. It was also interesting to find that although potential school dropouts did not differ significantly from non-potential school dropouts in concern expressed over negative perceptions on most of the eleven variables, they did, however, express considerable concern. Potential school dropouts indicated they were as bothered or, on some variables, more bothered by their negative perceptions of the aspect of school life studied.

The investigation of the influence of variables other than dropout category, namely gender, age, school, and a combination of these factors also produced interesting findings. The most predominant of these findings included the discovery that students who were male, overage, or attended certain schools held more negative perceptions of the four areas of school life under study. It was also of interest to find that students who were female, younger, and attended certain schools were generally more bothered by negative perceptions of school life.

CHAPTER V

Summary, Conclusions and Recommendations

Introduction

This chapter contains a summary of procedures, summary of findings, conclusions and implications, recommendations for practice and further research, and concluding statement.

Summary of Procedures

This study identified 134 potential school dropouts at the sixth and seventh grade levels and compared their perceptions of selected aspects of school life with the perceptions of 634 students, at the same levels, who were classified as non-potential school dropouts. The goal was to gain an understanding of how potential school dropouts differed from non-potential school dropouts in their perceptions of areas of school life which already had been shown by research to be problematic for those who have decided to drop out.

Six schools located within the St. John's area took part in this study and all sixth and seventh grade students in attendance from those schools participated. Students were identified by I.D. number, school, grade,

age, and gender.

Two instruments were used to collect data for this study. The first, the Student Checklist was administered personally by the researcher so that students could be assured of complete confidentiality. This approach also afforded the researcher the opportunity to deal directly with any questions concerning the checklist and observe that the students responded to the data collection procedure with seriousness and interest. Teachers were provided with free time during the administration of the checklist to the students and were requested to complete the second instrument, Early Detection of At-Risk Students Checklist. This checklist provided information on the characteristics of the students identified as potential school dropouts.

Statistical analyses of the data were provided by the SPSSX computer program. These analyses answered the following research questions:

1. Are there significant differences in frequency and intensity of perceptions between potential and non-potential school dropouts on: (a) teacher attitudes, (b) teacher behaviours, and (c) teacher expectations?

2. Are there significant differences in frequency and intensity of perception between potential and non-

potential school dropouts on: (a) effectiveness of school discipline and (b) fairness of school discipline?

3. Are there significant differences in frequency and intensity of perceptions between potential and non-potential school dropouts on: (a) interest of school work, (b) relevance of school work, (c) difficulty of school work, and (d) satisfaction with school work?

4. Are there significant differences in frequency and intensity of perceptions between potential and non-potential school dropouts on: (a) expectation for school success and (b) opportunities for school success?

Summary of Findings

Differences in students' perceptions of teachers.

Through the analysis of data in this study, it has been shown that there were significant differences in frequency but not in the intensity of perceptions between potential and non-potential school dropouts on teacher attitudes, behaviours, and expectations.

A comparison of scores in Chapter IV (Table 17) revealed that non-potential school dropouts significantly exceeded potential school dropouts in the frequency with which they perceived positive teacher attitudes, behaviours, and expectations. The largest discrepancy was in

potential and non-potential school dropouts' perceptions of teacher attitudes. These findings were similar to findings cited by Radwanski (1987) in the Ontario Study of the Relevance of Education and the Issue of Dropout.

Potential and non-potential school dropouts, as indicated in Chapter IV (Table 19), demonstrated that they differed only marginally on the intensity of their perceptions on teacher attitudes, teacher behaviours, and teacher expectations. The mean scores of both groups revealed that they were both bothered moderately by negative perceptions of teacher attitudes, teacher behaviours, and teacher expectations.

Gender, age, and school attended were also shown to have significantly influenced student scores on both the frequency and intensity of student perceptions on teacher attitudes, behaviours, and expectations. Male and older students recorded more frequent negative perceptions of these variables, while females and students in schools #4, #5, and #6 indicated that they were more bothered by negative perceptions of teacher attitudes, behaviours, and expectations.

Differences in students' perceptions of school discipline.

Data collected in this study revealed, as well, that potential and non-potential school dropouts showed significant differences in the frequency with which they viewed effectiveness of school discipline and fairness of school discipline. The two groups also showed significant differences in the intensity of their perceptions on fairness of school discipline but not on effectiveness of school discipline.

The difference in scores as shown in Chapter IV (Table 24) indicated that overall potential school dropouts had more negative perceptions of school discipline. Apparently, they perceived school discipline as being less effective and less fair than non-potential school dropouts. These findings supported the results of Wehlage and Rutter (1986) and others in the literature who found that problems with the disciplinary system contributed to students dropping out of school.

While both groups of students differed significantly in the frequency of their perceptions of school discipline, the same did not occur on the Intensity scale. There was only a minor difference recorded in the scores of potential and non-potential school dropouts in the

intensity of their perceptions on effectiveness of school discipline. This indicated that both groups were somewhat bothered equally by the use of punishment and the withholding of rewards as disciplinary measures. It was, however, surprising to find that non-potential school dropouts scored higher than potential school dropouts on the Intensity scale on fairness of school discipline. This translated into non-potential school dropouts indicating that they were more bothered than potential school dropouts by negative perceptions of fair school disciplinary practices. This finding was unexpected as it would have been reasonable to assume that potential school dropouts who saw disciplinary practices as being less fair would have also been more bothered by such practices. This might indeed be an area worthy of further investigation.

Students' scores on effectiveness of school discipline and fairness of school discipline were also significantly influenced by gender, age, and school attended. Older students and males were shown to have more negative perceptions of both effectiveness and fairness of school discipline, while females and younger students (11 - 12 year olds), were more bothered by negative perceptions of school discipline.

Differences in students' perceptions of school work.

From the results in Chapter IV (Table 26), it was apparent that potential and non-potential school dropouts differed significantly in the frequency of their perceptions of school work. As was expected, potential school dropouts perceived school work to be less interesting and relevant, more difficult and less satisfying than non-potential school dropouts. This finding supported the view of Bowman and Matthews as cited by Pawlovich (1985), who indicated that lack of interest and purpose were significant in causing students to drop out as they rejected and felt rejected by the school.

In Chapter IV (Table 27), it was demonstrated that potential and non-potential school dropouts did not differ significantly in the intensity of their perceptions of school work except on difficulty on school work. Although potential school dropouts recorded more negative perceptions than non-potential school dropouts on interest, relevance, and satisfaction of school work, these differences were not great enough to indicate that potential school dropouts were more intensely bothered than non-potential school dropouts on these variables. It was interesting to note, however, that both potential

school dropouts and non-potential school dropouts recorded relatively high scores on intensity of perceptions on, interest of school work, relevance of school work, and satisfaction with school work. This indicated that, although they did not significantly differ in the degree to which they were bothered by negative perceptions, they were more than moderately bothered by negative perceptions of school work. The fact that potential school dropouts were equally as concerned as non-potential school dropouts about the interest, relevance, and satisfaction of school work was a positive sign as it indicated that they are concerned about what they did in school. Potential school dropouts' scores on intensity of perceptions on the variable, difficulty of school work, indicated that they were significantly more bothered by their perceptions that school work was difficult. This finding was predictable as the most recent statistics released by the Newfoundland Department of Education (March, 1988) revealed that perceived difficulty of school work has been quoted by dropouts to be one of their major concerns about school. The results of this study, however, revealed that potential school dropouts were bothered by perceived difficulty of school work long before they decide to drop out.

Gender, age, and school attended were also shown to be significant influences on students' perceptions of most of the variables that measured school work. Overall, males, overage students, and students attending certain schools recorded more negative perceptions of school work. In terms of intensity of perceptions there were several findings worthy of note. Females were shown to be more bothered by negative perceptions on the variable, satisfaction with school work and overage students indicated that they were greatly bothered by negative perceptions on the variable, interest of school work.

Differences in students' perception of school success

From the results in this study, it was evident that potential school dropouts perceived their expectations for school success and opportunities for school success more negatively than non-potential school dropouts. The difference recorded by the two groups on the Frequency scale on the variable, expectations for school success, showed a larger discrepancy between the two groups on this variable than any other variable measured. The scores indicated that non-potential school dropouts had much higher expectations for school success than did

potential school dropouts. Although both groups scored moderately on frequency of perception of opportunities for school success, it was also apparent that potential school dropouts perceived significantly fewer opportunities for success in school. This, according to Rutter et al. (1979), would decrease their chances for success in school.

Since potential school dropouts had lower expectations for school success, it was expected that they would be most bothered by negative perceptions of expectations for school success. This did not occur as it was shown by the scores on the Intensity scale that non-potential school dropouts were more bothered by negative perceptions of expectations for school success. This could be an indication that potential school dropouts have learned not to expect as much success in school and thus were not as intensely bothered when it did not occur. A positive sign, however, was that the mean scores of both groups were relatively high which indicated that even potential school dropouts were more than moderately bothered by negative perceptions of expectations for school success. Potential school dropouts also indicated that they were slightly more bothered than non-potential school dropouts by perceived lack of

opportunities for school success. This difference, however, was not considered to be significant at the .05 level. The mean scores for both groups on this variable were relatively low, which indicated that neither group was greatly bothered by negative perceptions of perceived lack of opportunities for school success.

It was also of interest to note that students' perceptions of school success could be influenced by gender and age of the student as well as the school attended. The major findings on these influences suggest that male and overage students recorded more negative perceptions on both expectations for school success and opportunities for school success.

Conclusions and Implications

From this study, it was apparent that sixth and seventh grade students classified as potential and non-potential school dropouts perceived aspects of school life, broadly defined, as teachers, school discipline, school work, and school success, differently. Perceptions were measured by frequency which gave an indication of how positive or negative students perceptions were and by intensity which provided an indication of the degree to which negative perceptions of school life bothered the

students. Frequency scores showed that potential school dropouts perceived all eleven measured school-related variables more negatively than non-potential school dropouts. Intensity scores showed that potential school dropouts were as bothered or more bothered than non-potential school dropouts by negative perceptions on most of the school-related variables. These findings suggested that potential school dropouts at the sixth and seventh grade levels did not perceive the same degree of affirmation in the school environment as non-potential school dropouts but yet still cared about what went on in school.

As pointed out in the literature, by Brophy and Good (1973) teachers' interactional patterns can have an influential affect upon students. Martin (1985) suggested that a good relationship with the teacher was essential if the student was to do well in school. The results produced by this study indicated that potential school dropouts perceived teachers as having more negative attitudes, behaviours, and expectations than non-potential school dropouts. This differential in students' perceptions translated into potential school dropouts having less positive relationships with teachers and thus it was assumed that teachers exerted less

positive influence on this group. Whether this difference was due to actual teacher attitudes, behaviours, and expectations or to the interpretation imposed by potential school dropouts themselves, it must be remembered that this is the reality of school for these students and it is this reality that schools must seek to change.

The fact that potential school dropouts recorded no significant differences from non-potential school dropouts on the Intensity scale had positive implications for those students. This demonstrated that potential school dropouts were still as bothered by negative perceptions of teacher attitudes, behaviours, and expectations as non-potential school dropouts, who were not showing symptoms of alienation from the school. It was assumed that as long as they were still indicating concern about these negative perceptions then teachers' attitudes, behaviours, and expectations were still important to them. It is important to note, as indicated in Chapter IV, that as students become older they were less bothered by negative perceptions of teacher attitudes, behaviours, and expectations. This makes identification of potential school dropouts at an early age critical if steps are to be taken to avert these alienating perceptions.

School discipline was another area that was shown by

research to have an alienating effect upon dropouts and potential school dropouts. Potential school dropouts in this study perceived school discipline to be significantly less effective and less fair than non-potential school dropouts. In a review of the literature conducted by Self (1985) on students who have dropped out, it was shown that one of their major complaints about school was related to problems they perceived with the disciplinary system. The results of this study supported the view of Wehlage and Rutter (1982) that perceived unfairness and ineffectiveness of the disciplinary system could be an alienating factor for students in school. The reasons for potential school dropouts perceiving school discipline as ineffective and unfair may be complex and are not addressed in this study. However, the fact remains that these young students who have been identified as potential school dropouts saw school discipline as a negative force that may be pushing them away from school. Knowledge of these perceptions may stimulate educators to explore alternate ways of applying school disciplinary measures that would serve to strengthen rather than weaken the potential school dropouts' bonds with the school.

The fact that potential school dropouts were signif-

icantly less bothered than non-potential school dropouts by negative perceptions on fairness of school discipline may be an indication that these students have already adopted an attitude of passive acceptance of perceived unfairness of school discipline. This finding may also be an indication that they have internalized the blame and thus tended to blame themselves rather than the school. This would account for them being less bothered by negative perceptions on fairness of school discipline than non-potential school dropouts who recorded fewer negative perceptions but expressed greater concern over perceived unfairness.

School work, in this study, was perceived to be less interesting, relevant, more difficult and as offering less satisfaction to potential school dropouts than non-potential school dropouts. This has important implications for the possibilities of students dropping out of school. The most recent statistics released by the Department of Education in Newfoundland (1988) indicated that dropouts identified a lack of interest in school as one of the most important reasons for dropping out. Cipywnyk, Pawlovich and Randhawa (1983), Fagan (1979), and Watson (1975) and other researchers have correlated dropping out with lack of relevance, difficulty and dis-

satisfaction with school work. The results produced in this study on school work in terms of interest, relevance, difficulty, and satisfaction can certainly be interpreted as alienating factors that would not encourage students to stay in school. It is noteworthy to recall from Chapter IV that male and older students indicated that they were more bothered by negative perceptions on interest of school work. It is also shown in Chapter III (Table 3 and 4) that males and overage students comprised a great percentage of the potential school dropout sample in this study. The knowledge that potential school dropouts perceived all measured aspects of school life more negatively and have indicated that they are significantly more bothered by perceptions of school work as uninteresting can be valuable to educators who are concerned with keeping those students in school. The fact that many of these potential school dropouts were male and older may require educators to adapt programs so as to produce more meaningful school work experiences.

Potential school dropouts have been shown in this study to be significantly more negative on expectations for school success and opportunities for school success. Seventy nine percent of the students classified as poten-

tial school dropouts in this study were identified by teachers on the characteristics "low or failing school grades." It is important to recall that a major local study, Leaving Early (1984) indicated that approximately 40 percent of school dropouts attributed dropping out to academic failure. It is, therefore, reasonable to assume that the potential school dropouts in this study, who are already showing high rates of failure, are at risk of dropping out because of low expectations for school success. The fact that potential school dropouts perceived fewer opportunities for success in school than non-potential school dropouts is suggestive. This finding suggests that these students perceived teachers giving them fewer opportunities to respond in class and that they did not see competition with classmates as opportunities that would allow them to succeed. An awareness of these perceptions by educators may cause the school to re-examine the opportunities that are made available to potential school dropouts to experience success.

Both potential and non-potential school dropouts indicated that they were not greatly bothered by negative perceptions on opportunities for school success. The researcher was reluctant to conclude much from this

finding as it was limited by the nature of the two items on the Intensity scale of the checklist that measured this variable. It was not surprising to find students at the sixth and seventh grade not greatly bothered by the teacher not calling upon them in class. It was also conceivable that students would not be bothered by failing "to win" when in competition with classmates, as this type of success is usually restricted to a few and others may not have expectations to win and therefore would not be intensely bothered when winning did not occur. This could also explain why potential school dropouts indicated that they were not as intensely bothered by lower expectations for school success as non-potential school dropouts. Non-potential school dropouts who have higher expectations for school success would naturally be expected to be more concerned if success was not experienced. Potential school dropouts, on the other hand, who have experienced success less frequently, have lower expectations for success and thus would not be as bothered as more successful students when failure does occur. This may be an indication that they have lessened their expectations of achieving success in school. Insight into these perceptions of potential school dropouts may help educators see that many of these

students are discouraged learners. This may cause educators to re-examine how the school is responding to these students.

It can be concluded then, that the reality of school was different for the potential and non-potential school dropouts identified in this study. The study did not purport to identify why the perceptions of potential and non-potential school dropouts differed but merely to investigate how they differed on several important aspects of school life. An awareness that potential school dropouts have significantly more negative perceptions of teachers, school discipline, school work, and school success at the sixth and seventh grade level could stimulate educators to consider "bottom-up" solutions to the problem of students feeling alienated from or pushed out of school.

Recommendations

Recommendations for further study.

Recommendations for further study arising from the findings of this study in the area of prevention of student dropouts are as follows:

1. Fifteen students who were identified as potential school dropouts in Grade Six and Seven indicated

that they did not expect to finish high school. It is recommended that efforts be made to identify students who do not expect to finish high school and case studies be conducted on those students to gain a thorough understanding of why those students do not anticipate completing high school. This would also allow researchers to discover possible ways by which dropping out can be prevented for those students.

2. The results produced by this study clearly indicated that those students whom teachers identified as potential school dropouts had more negative perceptions of school. It is recommended that studies be conducted to investigate why students who are identified as potential school dropouts have more negative perceptions of teachers, school discipline, school work, and school success.

3. A general pattern that emerged from findings in this study is that older students (13 - 15 years) found school work to be less interesting than younger students and were generally more bothered by perceptions of school work as boring. It is, therefore, recommended that studies be conducted to investigate why older students perceive school work to be lacking in interest and how this may influence their aspirations to complete high

school.

4. It was noted in the results produced by this research that students attending certain schools had more negative perceptions of school life than did other students. It is, therefore, recommended that comparative studies be conducted to investigate specific factors which may contribute to differing student perceptions of school life.

5. It has been demonstrated by the findings in this study that male students at the Grade Six and Seven level hold more negative perceptions of teachers, school discipline, school work, and school success. It is, therefore, recommended that research be conducted to determine why males differ significantly from females in their perceptions of school life.

6. It was recognized that perceptions change as students mature. It is, therefore, recommended that longitudinal studies be conducted to determine if and how students perceptions of school life change from middle school to secondary school.

7. It was evident from this study that potential school dropouts were as bothered or more bothered by negative perceptions of school life as non-potential school dropouts. It is, therefore, recommended that

similar studies on intensity of student perceptions of school life be conducted at the secondary school level to ascertain how the degree of intensity changes with increased age and grade.

Recommendations for practice.

Based on the findings arising from this study, the researcher suggests the following recommendations.

1. It was noted by the researcher while collecting data for this study that teachers were generally concerned about the students whom they identified as potential school dropouts. Many of these teachers expressed the view that the identification process raised their awareness of the special needs of those students and of the fact that so many students at an early age seemed destined to drop out. Many of these teachers felt that an early identification of potential school dropouts program could be a means of focusing more individual attention on the problems of those students. It is, therefore, recommended that school boards develop a policy of having individual schools undertake an early identification of potential school dropouts program as a first step toward prevention of students from dropping out.

2. Knowledge of how students perceive school policies and practices can be an important source of information for educators. It could allow school officials to gain greater understanding of how these school practices and policies are already effective or could be more effective in preventing student alienation from school. It is, therefore, recommended that schools, as a part of their evaluation process, periodically conduct research into how students perceive school life.

Concluding Statement

This study was conducted to determine whether potential and non-potential school dropouts at the sixth and seventh grade levels differed in their perceptions on teachers, school discipline, school work, and school success. Research findings indicated that significant differences existed in the frequency of their perceptions on all variables and in intensity on some of the variables.

While it was recognized that there was no single cause of the dropout problem, it was implied by this study and supported by the literature that school-related factors may be putting students at risk of not completing school. It has been demonstrated through the data

collected on the differences in students' perceptions of school in this study that those classified as potential school dropouts did not perceive the school to be as inviting or as affirming as non-potential school dropouts. This begs for educators and researchers to ask why.

Bibliography

Ahlstrom, W.M., & Havighurst, R.M. (1971). 400 losers. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Amatora, Sister M. (1952). Can elementary school children discriminate certain traits in their teachers? Child Development, 23, 75-80.

American Association of School Administrators. (1985). Raising standards in schools: Problems and solutions. (AASA Critical Issues Report). Arlington, VA: American Association of School Administrators.

Anderson, C.S. (1982). The search for school climate: A review of the research. Review of Educational Research, 52(3), 368-420.

Applegate, J. (1981). Perceived problems of secondary school students. Journal of Educational Research, 75(1), 49-55.

Baksh, I., & Martin, W. (1986). A student's perspective on who causes low achievement. Comment on Education, 17(2).

Beachham, H. (1986). Reading and helping high school dropouts and potential school leavers. Tallahassee, Florida: Flordia A and M University. (ERIC Reproduction Service No. ED 235 451).

Bennirga, J., Guskey, T., & Thornburg, K. (1982). The relationship between teacher attitudes and student perceptions of classroom climate. The Elementary School Journal, 82(1), 66-75.

Braun, C. (1976). Teacher expectation: socio-psychological dynamics. Review of Educational Research, 46, 185-213.

Brophy, J.G. (1979). Teacher behaviour and its effects. Journal of Educational Research, 71, 733-50.

Brophy, J., & Good, T. (1970). Teacher communication of differential expectation for children's classroom performance: Some behavioral data. Journal of Educational Psychology, 61, 365-374.

Brophy, J., & Good, T. (1973). Individual differences: Toward an understanding of classroom life. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston.

Brophy, J., & Good, T. (1974). Teacher student relationships: Causes and consequences. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston.

Cipywnyk, S.V., Pawlovich, W.E., & Randhawa, B.S. (1983). Early school leavers in Saskatchewan: A preliminary study. Saskatoon: University of Saskatchewan.

Chairborne, W. (1969). Expectancy effects in the classroom: A failure to replicate. Journal of Educational Psychology, 60, 377-383.

Clements, R.D., Gainey, L.M., & Malitz, D. (1980). The accuracy of students perceptions of themselves and their classrooms. Paper presented at the annual general meeting of the American Educational Research Association. Boston.

Cohen, N. (1979). Recent advances in our understanding of school effects research. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Association of Colleges of Teacher Education. Chicago, Illinois.

Cooper, H. (1979). Pygmalion grows up: A model for teacher expectation communication and performance influence. Review of Educational Research, 49, 389-410.

Cooper, H.M., & Good, T.L. (1982). Pygmalion grows up: Studies in the expectation communication process. New York: Longman.

Coopersmith, S., & Feldman, R. (1974). Fostering a positive self-concept and high self-esteem in the classroom. In R.H. Coop and K. White (Eds.), Psychological concepts in the classroom. New York: Harper and Row.

Cornbleth, C., & Button, C. (1974). Expectations for pupil achievement and teacher-pupil interaction. Social Education, 38, 54-85.

Davidson, H., & Lang, G. (1960). Children's perceptions of their teachers' feelings toward them related to self perception, school achievement, and behaviour. Journal of Experimental Education, 29, 107-118.

Department of Education. (1988). Education statistics. (Report No. ED 88-05). St. John's, Newfoundland.

Decima Research. (1987). A report to the Ontario study of the relevance of education and the issue of drop-outs, 13-45.

Druian, G. (1986). Effective schooling and at-risk youth: What the research shows. Portland: Northwest Regional Educational Lab, goal Based Educational Program. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 275 926).

Edmonds, R., & Frederikson, J. (1979). Search for effective schools: The identification and analysis of city schools that are instructionally effective for poor children. (Report No: UD 079 304). Michigan, Detroit: (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 170 396).

Fleming, E. & Anttonen, R. (1971). Teacher expectancy of my fair lady. American Educational Research Journal, 8, 241-252.

Fraser, B.J. (1980). Research on classroom learning environment in the 1970's and 1980's. Studies in Educational Evaluation, 6, 221-223.

Fraser, B.J., & Walberg, H.J. (1981). Psychological learning environment in science classrooms: A review of research. Studies in Education, 8, 67-92.

Gansneder, B.M. (1970). The relationship between teacher attitudes toward pupils and pupils attitudes and achievement. A paper presented at the American Educational Research Association Convention. Minneapolis. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 037 788).

Goldfarb Consultants. (1987). Student retention and transition in the secondary schools, 64.

Good, T.L. (1970). Which students do teachers call on? Elementary School Journal, 70, 190-198.

Good, T.L. (1981). Listening to students. Paper presented at the symposium on student perspectives in the study of the classroom at the annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association.

Good, T. (1981). Teacher expectation and student perceptions: A decade of research. Educational Research, 38, 415-421.

Greene, B.I. (1966). Preventing school dropouts. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall Inc.

Haak, R.A., Kleiber, D.A., & Peck, R. (1972). Student evaluation of teacher instrument II. Austin: University of Texas, Research and Development Center for Teacher Evaluation.

Hewitt, J., & Johnson, W. (1979). Dropping out in Middletown. The High School Journal, 62(6), 252-256.

Hohol, A.E. (1955). Factors associated with school dropouts. Alberta Journal of Educational Research, 1(1), 7-17.

Jeter, ., & Davis, D.L. (1973). Elementary school teachers' differential classroom interaction with children as a function of differential expectations of pupil achievement. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Education Association. New Orleans.

Jose, J., & Cody, J. (1971). Teacher-pupil interaction as it related to attempted changes in teacher expectancy of academic ability. American Educational Research Journal, 8, 38-49.

Keogh, B., & Smith, C. (1970). Early identification of educationally high potential and high risk children. Journal of Social Psychology, 8(4), 285-290.

Kumar, R.C., Pedro, S., & Watson, C. (1977). Forecasting note III -- estimating the number of secondary school dropouts from a local school system. Educational Planning, 4(3), 44-59.

Leacock, E. (1969). Teaching and learning in city schools. New York: Basic.

Leaving early - A student of student retention in Newfoundland and Labrador. (1984). St. John's, Newfoundland.

Mahood, W. (1981). Born losers: School dropouts and pushouts. NASSP Bulletin, 65(441), 54-57.

Martin, W. (1985). Voices from the classroom. St. John's, Newfoundland: Creative Publishers.

Massachusetts Advocacy Center. (1986). The way out: Student exclusion practices in Boston schools. Boston: Author.

McClintock, C. (1978). Social values: Their definition, measurement and development. Journal of Research and Development in Education, 12, 121-136.

McDaniel, T. (1984). A primer on motivation: Principles old and new. Phi Delta Kappan, 46-49.

Mendoza, S., Good, T., & Brophy, J. (1971). The communication of teacher experiences in junior high school. A paper presented at the meeting of the American Educational Research Association. New York.

Moos, R.H. (1979). Educational climates. In H.J. Walberg (Eds.), Educational environments and effects. CA: McCatchan.

National Foundation for the Improvement of Education. (1986). Operation rescue: A blueprint for success. Washington, DC: National Foundation for the Improvement of Education.

Palardy, M.J. (1969): What teachers believe, what children achieve. Elementary School Journal, 69, 370-74.

Pawlovich, W. (1985). Early school leaving: Antecedents, correlates and consequences. Guidance and Counselling, 2, 41-53.

Peck, N., Law, A., & Mills, R. (1987). Dropout prevention: what we have learned. Ann Arbor, Mich: ERIC Clearing House on Counselling and Personal Services. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 279 989).

Peebles, D. (1973). Dropping out: A review of research and literature. Toronto: North York Board of Education.

Peng, S., & Takai, R. (1983). High school dropouts: Descriptive information from high school and beyond. (Report No. NCES-83-221b). Washington, DC: National Center for Educational Statistics. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 236 366).

Pilling, D., & Pringle, M.H. (1978). Controversial issues in child development. London: Elek Book.

Radwanski, G. (1987). Ontario study of the relevance of education and the issue of dropouts. Toronto, Ontario.

Report of the Royal Commission on Employment and Unemployment. (1986). Building on our strengths. St. John's, Newfoundland.

Rist, R.C. (1970). Student social class and teacher expectations: The self-fulfilling prophecy in ghetto education. Harvard Educational Review, 40, 411-451.

Rosenthal, R., & Jacobson, L. (1986). Pygmalion in the classroom. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston.

Rumberger, K. (1981). Why kids drop out of high school. (Program Report No. 81-84). Stanford, CA: Institute for Research on Educational Finance and Governance.

Rutter, M., Maughan, B., Mortimore, P., Ouston, J., & Smith, A. (1979). Fifteen thousand hours. Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press.

Seaver, W.B. (1973). Effects of naturally induced teacher expectencies. Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 28, 333-42.

Self, T. (1985). Dropouts: A review of the literature. Project talent search. Monroe: Northeast Louisiana University. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 260 307).

Sewell, T.E., Palmo, A.J., & Manni, J.L. (1981). High school dropout: Psychological, academic and vocational factors. Urban Education, 16(1), 65-76.

Sinclair, R.L. (1970). Elementary school educational environments: Toward schools that are responsive to students. National Elementary Principal, 49(5), 53-58.

Stern, G.G. (1970). People in context: Measuring person - environment congruence in education and industry. New York: John Wiley & Sons.

Stevenson, H., Parker, T., Wilkinson, A., Hegion, A., & Fish, E. (1976). Predictive value of teacher ratings of young children. Review of Educational Psychology, 68, 507-517.

Stoughton, C., & Grady, B. (1978). How many students will drop out and why? North Central Association Quarterly, 53(2), 312-315.

Symonds, P.M. (1955). Characteristics of the effective teacher. Journal of Experimental Education, 23, 289-310.

Task Force on Education. (1979). Improving the quality of education: Challenge and opportunity. St. John's, Newfoundland.

Thomas, D.S. (1929). Some new techniques for studying social behaviour. New York: Bureau of Publications, Teachers College, Columbia University.

Thronburg, H.D. (1973). An investigation of attitudes among potential dropouts from minority groups during their freshman year in high school. School Leaving and Instruction: Readings. Monterey: Brooks/Cole.

Thronsburg, H. (1975). Attitudinal determinants in holding dropouts in school. The Journal of Educational Research, 68(5), 181-185.

Tyo, A. (1972). A comparison of the verbal behaviour of teachers in interaction with migrant and non migrant students. New York: State University of New York, Genesco, Center for Migrant Studies. (ERIC Document Production Service No. ED 075 160).

Walberg, H.J. (Ed.). (1979). Educational environments and effects: EValuation, policy and productivity. Berkeley, CA: McCutchan.

Walburg, H.J. (1976). Psychology of learning environments: Behavioral, structural or perceptual? In L. Shulman (Ed.), Review of research in education (Vol. 4). Itasco, IL.

Watson, C. (1975). Focus on dropouts: An abridged version of the report of the Ontario secondary school dropout study. Toronto, Ontario: Ontario University of Education.

Wehlage, G. (1983). Effective programs for the marginal high school student. Fastback 1987. Bloomington, IN: Phi Delta Kappan Educational Foundation. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 235 132).

Wehlage, G. (1988). Dropping out: Can schools be expected to prevent it? Paper prepared for presentation at the annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association. New Orleans.

Wehlage, G., & Rutter, R. (1982). Effective programs for the marginal high school student. A report to the Wisconsin Governor's Employment and Training Office. madison, WI: The University of Wisconsin.

Wehlage, G., & Rutter, R.A. (1986). Dropping out: How much do schools contribute to the problem. Teacher College Record, 87(3), 374-392.

Weinstein, R. (1983). Student perceptions of schooling. The Elementary School Journal, 83(4), 287-312.

Weinstein, R., & Middlestadt, S. (1979). Students perceptions of teacher interactions with male high and low achievers. Journal of Educational Psychology, 71, 421-431.

Wells, S. (1987). At-risk youth: Research, programs and recommendations. Paper presented to Adams County School District 50. Colorado.

West, C., & Anderson T. (1976). The question of preponderant causation in teacher expectancy research. Review of Educational Research, 46, 613-630.

Withall, J. (1949). The development of a technique for the measurement of social-emotional climate in the classroom. Journal of Experimental Education, 17, 347-361.

Whitfield, T. (1976). How students perceive their teachers. Theory into Practice, 15(5), 347-351.

APPENDIX A

Early Detection of At-Risk Students Checklist

Appendix A

Early Detection of At-Risk Students Checklist

Please complete this checklist for any student who you consider to be at risk of not completing high school. Check the characteristic(s), if any, that are applicable to each student identified. Please add additional school-related characteristics which you feel may be significant in placing the student at risk.

___ Has repeated a grade at least once.

___ Little or no participation in extracurricular or special interest activities.

___ Higher than average rate of discipline problems.

___ Irregular attendance patterns.

___ Difficulty in communicating with teachers and peers.

___ Low or failing school grades.

___ Expresses dislike for school.

___ Severe reading problems.

Other school-related symptoms: _____

_____

Student's Name: _____ Grade: _____

APPENDIX B

Characteristics Associated with Dropouts/ Potential School Dropouts

Appendix B

Characteristics Associated With Dropouts/ Potential School Dropouts

School-Related Characteristics Associated With Dropouts/Potential School Dropouts	Source
Low or failing grades Record of truancy or excessive absence from school Low level of participation in school activities Difficulty in communication with teachers and other students	Ross, 1983
Low involvement in school activities	Coombs & Cooley, 1968
Poor grades Is repeating or have repeated a grade	Schreiber, 1964
Poor academics Dislikes school High grade retention Low participation in extracurricular activities Discipline problems Poor reading ability High absenteeism	Self, 1985 (A Review of the Literature)
Poor grades Did not like school	Ekstrom et al., 1986

School-Related Characteristics Associated With Dropouts/Potential School Dropouts	Source
High absenteeism	Howell & Frege, 1982
Low grades Discipline problems Truancy	Wehlage & Rutter, 1986
Repeating a grade	Kaplan & Luch, 1977
Low academic achievement	Hewitt & Johnson, 1979
Had poor grades Alienation from school	Peng & Takai, 1983
Failing Reading problems Discipline problems Irregular attendance patterns	Beacham, 1980
Non-attendance Discipline difficulties	Stroughton & Grady, 1978
Dislike school Poor performance	Rumberger, 1981

APPENDIX C

Profile of School-Related Characteristics of Potential School Dropouts in this Study

Appendix C

Profile of School-Related Characteristics of Potential School Dropouts in this Study

The table outlines the characteristics listed on the Early Detection of At-Risk Student Checklist, the number of students who were deemed by teachers to demonstrate each characteristics compared to the total potential school dropout populations, equivalent percentages and ranking by frequency of characteristic.

Characteristics	Number	Percentage	Rank
A. Has repeated a grade at least once	78/134	58%	2
B. Little or no participation in extracurricular or special activities	44/134	33%	5
C. Higher than average rate of discipline problems	29/134	22%	8
D. Irregular attendance patterns	20/134	15%	9
E. Difficulty in communicating with teachers and peers	33/134	25%	7
F. Low or failing school grades	103/134	79%	1
G. Expresses dislike for school	49/134	37%	4
H. Severe reading problems	55/134	41%	3
I. Other	40/134	30%	6

Note: 85% of students were attributed at least 2 characteristics by teachers.
65% were attributed more than 2 characteristics.

APPENDIX D

Letter to School Board Officials

Appendix D

Letter to School Board Officials

5 Kilkenny Street
St. John's, NF
April 30, 1988

Mr. W. Whalen
Superintendent
St. John's Roman Catholic School Board
Belvedere, Bonaventue Avenue
St. John's, NF

Dear Mr. Whalen:

I am presently involved in conducting research on the perceptions of sixth and seventh grade students within the St. John's area. This study will focus on the identification of students at risk of dropping out before graduation and comparing their perceptions on selected aspects of school life with those of students not perceived to be at risk.

I have discussed this project with Mrs. Roe from your office and am now requesting permission to proceed with the study in selected schools during the month of May.

Please find enclosed a package of information outlining the parameters of the study.

Thank you for your cooperation and support.

Sincerely,

Joan O'Reilly

APPENDIX E

Letter to Parents

Appendix E

Letter to Parents

May, 1988

Dear Parent(s):

As a graduate student in Educational Psychology at Memorial University, I am presently involved in research related to students' perceptions of school. I believe that the students, even at the elementary level, have insights into the schooling process and these insights can be a valuable source of information to educators who plan and direct school life for students.

The questionnaire to be completed by your child will be held in the strictest of confidence.

I am enlisting your support for this project. If you have any questions, please call me at 722-6466 or my supervisor, Mrs. Mildred Cahill, Department of Educational Psychology, Memorial University (737-4355).

Thank you for your cooperation.

Sincerely,

Mildred Cahill (Assistant Professor) Joan O'Reilly
Department of Educational Psychology, Memorial University

APPENDIX F

Student Checklist

Student Checklist

As students, you have a lot of ideas on what happens in school. This checklist will allow you to give your views on certain aspects of school life.

Look at the examples below and the way one student responded to them.

	All of the time	Most of the time	Sometimes	Hardly ever	Never
The work I do in school is interesting.	☐	☑	☐	☐	☐

	A whole lot	A lot	Some	Very little	Not at all
When the work I do in school is not interesting, it bothers me.	☑	☐	☐	☐	☐

Notice that this student said that the work he/she did in school was interesting *most of the time*. Notice also that the student said when the work he/she did in school was not interesting, it bothered the student *a whole lot*.

Now turn the page and respond to the items on the checklist according to the way you feel. Please check only one box for each statement. If you do not understand a statement, please ask to have it explained to you.

	All of the time	Most of the time	Sometimes	Hardly ever	Never
1. The work I do in school is difficult.	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3	☐ 4	☐ 5
2. Being rewarded in school helps me to improve.	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3	☐ 4	☐ 5
3. My teachers believe that I will have the right answers.	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3	☐ 4	☐ 5
4. I feel good about the work I do in school.	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3	☐ 4	☐ 5
5. I expect to do well on tests and quizzes.	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3	☐ 4	☐ 5
6. My work in school is interesting.	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3	☐ 4	☐ 5
7. My teachers see me as an important person.	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3	☐ 4	☐ 5

	A whole lot	A lot	Some	Very little	Not at all
1. When I find school work difficult, it bothers me.	☐ 5	☐ 4	☐ 3	☐ 2	☐ 1
2. When I am not rewarded in school, it bothers me.	☐ 5	☐ 4	☐ 3	☐ 2	☐ 1
3. When my teachers do not believe that I will have the right answers, it bothers me.	☐ 5	☐ 4	☐ 3	☐ 2	☐ 1
4. When I don't feel good about the work I do in school, it bothers me.	☐ 5	☐ 4	☐ 3	☐ 2	☐ 1
5. When I do not do well on tests and quizzes, it bothers me.	☐ 5	☐ 4	☐ 3	☐ 2	☐ 1
6. When my work in school is boring, it bothers me.	☐ 5	☐ 4	☐ 3	☐ 2	☐ 1
7. When my teachers do not see me as an important person, it bothers me.	☐ 5	☐ 4	☐ 3	☐ 2	☐ 1

	All of the time	Most of the time	Sometimes	Hardly ever	Never
8. Punishment in school helps me to improve.	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3	☐ 4	☐ 5
9. My teachers listen to what I have to say.	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3	☐ 4	☐ 5
10. My teachers expect me to do well on tests and quizzes.	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3	☐ 4	☐ 5
11. Homework is useful.	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3	☐ 4	☐ 5
12. My teachers care about me.	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3	☐ 4	☐ 5
13. I am punished unfairly in school.	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3	☐ 4	☐ 5
14. My teachers believe that I am smart.	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3	☐ 4	☐ 5

	A whole lot	A lot	Some	Very little	Not at all
8. When I am punished in school, it bothers me.	☐ 5	☐ 4	☐ 3	☐ 2	☐ 1
9. When my teachers do not listen to what I have to say, it bothers me.	☐ 5	☐ 4	☐ 3	☐ 2	☐ 1
10. When my teachers do not expect me to do well on tests and quizzes, it bothers me.	☐ 5	☐ 4	☐ 3	☐ 2	☐ 1
11. When homework is not useful it bothers me.	☐ 5	☐ 4	☐ 3	☐ 2	☐ 1
12. When my teachers do not care about me, it bothers me.	☐ 5	☐ 4	☐ 3	☐ 2	☐ 1
13. When I am punished unfairly in school, it bothers me.	☐ 5	☐ 4	☐ 3	☐ 2	☐ 1
14. When I think my teachers do not believe that I am smart, it bothers me.	☐ 5	☐ 4	☐ 3	☐ 2	☐ 1

	All of the time	Most of the time	Sometimes	Hardly ever	Never
15. I win when I compete with others in class.	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3	☐ 4	☐ 5
16. My teachers call upon me to give answers in class.	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3	☐ 4	☐ 5
17. Being sent to the principal's office is a fair punishment.	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3	☐ 4	☐ 5
18. My teachers believe that "I don't care about learning."	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3	☐ 4	☐ 5
19. When I need help, my teachers help me with my work.	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3	☐ 4	☐ 5
20. Much of what I learn in school does not make sense.	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3	☐ 4	☐ 5
21. My teachers expect me to have good ideas.	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3	☐ 4	☐ 5

	A whole lot	A lot	Some	Very little	Not at all
15. When I compete with others in class and don't win, it bothers me.	☐ 5	☐ 4	☐ 3	☐ 2	☐ 1
16. When my teachers do not call upon me to give answers in class, it bothers me.	☐ 5	☐ 4	☐ 3	☐ 2	☐ 1
17. If I were sent to the principal's office, it would bother me.	☐ 5	☐ 4	☐ 3	☐ 2	☐ 1
18. When my teachers believe that "I don't care about learning", it bothers me.	☐ 5	☐ 4	☐ 3	☐ 2	☐ 1
19. When my teachers do not help me with my work, it bothers me.	☐ 5	☐ 4	☐ 3	☐ 2	☐ 1
20. When I have to learn things in school that do not make sense, it bothers me.	☐ 5	☐ 4	☐ 3	☐ 2	☐ 1
21. When I think that my teachers don't expect me to have good ideas, it bothers me.	☐ 5	☐ 4	☐ 3	☐ 2	☐ 1

	All of the time	Most of the time	Sometimes	Hardly ever	Never
22. I feel that my classmates do better than I.	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3	☐ 4	☐ 5
23. My teachers like me.	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3	☐ 4	☐ 5
24. Getting detention is a fair punishment.	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3	☐ 4	☐ 5
25. My teachers expect me to answer in class.	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3	☐ 4	☐ 5
26. I expect to pass school tests.	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3	☐ 4	☐ 5
27. My teachers criticize me when I give incorrect answers.	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3	☐ 4	☐ 5
28. The work that I do in school is useful.	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3	☐ 4	☐ 5
29. My teachers praise me.	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3	☐ 4	☐ 5

	A whole lot	A lot	Some	Very little	Not at all
22. When I feel that my classmates do better than I, it bothers me.	☐ 5	☐ 4	☐ 3	☐ 2	☐ 1
23. When I feel that my teachers do not like me, it bothers me.	☐ 5	☐ 4	☐ 3	☐ 2	☐ 1
24. If I were to get a detention, it would bother me.	☐ 5	☐ 4	☐ 3	☐ 2	☐ 1
25. When I think that my teachers do not expect me to answer in class, it bothers me.	☐ 5	☐ 4	☐ 3	☐ 2	☐ 1
26. If I did not pass school tests, it would bother me.	☐ 5	☐ 4	☐ 3	☐ 2	☐ 1
27. When my teachers criticize me for giving incorrect answers, it bothers me.	☐ 5	☐ 4	☐ 3	☐ 2	☐ 1
28. When I feel that the work I do in school is not useful, it bothers me.	☐ 5	☐ 4	☐ 3	☐ 2	☐ 1
29. When my teachers do not praise me, it bothers me.	☐ 5	☐ 4	☐ 3	☐ 2	☐ 1

Now that you have finished telling me about how you feel about school, I would like to know some things about you. Some of the questions can be answered by circling a letter. Others will need a short answer written in.

Please be sure to answer every question.

1. My name is _____

2. Sex (circle one letter) (a) male (b) female

3. My age is _____

4. The grade I am in is _____

5. I expect to finish high school (a) yes (b) no

APPENDIX G

Distribution of Items on Student Checklist

Appendix G

Distribution of Items on Student Checklist

Summary of the 4 aspects of school life broken down into eleven school-related variables and the number of items on the Student Checklist that comprised each variable.

Aspects of Life	Variable	Item Numbers on Checklist (Frequency and Intensity)[a]
Teachers	1. Teacher attitudes	7, 12, 14, 18, 23
	2. Teacher behaviours	9, 16, 19, 27, 29
	3. Teacher expectations	3, 10, 21, 25
School Discipline	4. Effectiveness of school discipline	2, 8
	5. Fairness of school discipline	13, 17, 24
School Work	6. Interest of school work	6
	7. Relevance of school work	11, 20, 28
	8. Difficulty of school work	1
	9. Satisfaction with school work	4
School Success	10. Expectation for school success	5, 22, 26
	11. Opportunities for school success	15, 16

[a]The Frequency and Intensity scales consisted of complementary items numbered 1 - 29 on each scale.